

# gay COMMUNITY NEWS

JANUARY 15-21, 1989  
VOLUME 16  
NO 26

BIPAD: 65498

\$1.00

FOR SIXTEEN YEARS, THE LESBIAN AND GAY WEEKLY

## Ousted midshipman challenges Navy

*Naval Academy student discharged for admitting he's gay*

By Chris Bull

NEW YORK — A former Naval Academy student filed suit in federal court Dec. 29 challenging the constitutionality of the U.S. military's policy of prohibiting lesbians and gay men from joining the service.

Joe Steffan, of Morehead, Minnesota, charged that the Navy violated his right to speech, association, equal protection and due process by forcing him to resign solely because he is gay. The Navy ousted Steffan, who is represented by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, less than two months before he was to graduate and receive his commission.

Steffan, 24, a battalion commander, had an outstanding military record and was set to graduate in the top 10 percent of his class, according to Lambda staff attorney, Sandra Lowe.

In mid-March of 1987, Steffan said he learned from a fellow student that he was under investigation by the Naval Investigative Service for being gay. According to legal briefs filed by Lambda, Steffan asked to meet with the Superintendent of the Naval Academy to request that he be allowed to graduate. His request was denied.

The Navy recommended Steffan's discharge for "insufficient aptitude" based on his admission that he is gay. According to Jay Fromkin, a spokesperson for the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland,

Steffan's record as a student is "irrelevant" to the case. "We simply enforce Naval regulations which say that homosexuality is incompatible with military service." Fromkin refused to comment on what prompted the investigation into Steffan's sexual orientation.

"It's a terribly unfair regulation," Lambda's Lowe told *GCN*. "Under military law if someone engages in homosexual acts it can be considered an aberration, but if someone admits to being gay, he or she will be discharged. It penalizes people for being honest about what they are."

Lowe said she is hopeful the courts will soon overturn the military's anti-gay policy. She said Steffan's suit is a particularly good challenge because of his outstanding military record. "The Naval Academy violated its own classification for graduation. He was clearly an excellent student, yet they claimed he had insufficient aptitude. It doesn't make any sense."

Several other challenges to the military's policy are pending. Sgt. Perry Watkins, who was discharged after a decade of being openly gay in the Army, and Cpt. Dusty Pruitt, a member of the army reserve who was discharged after she told the *Los Angeles Times* that she is a lesbian, are both awaiting California circuit court decisions.

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## 'Roe v. Wade' in jeopardy

*Reagan-packed court takes on Missouri abortion case*

By Jennie McKnight

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court agreed Jan. 9 to hear a case that could "gut" the 1973 landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade* making abortion legal. The Court agreed to consider a Missouri case which struck down a law banning the use of public hospitals or other facilities for abortions not necessary to save a woman's life, according to the *Boston Globe*. The law also prohibited public employees from performing or assisting in an abortion and prevented tax revenues from being used to encourage or counsel women to have abortions.

The federal Appeals Court for the 8th Circuit, when it struck down the law, said: "Missouri is not simply declining to fund abortions when it forbids its doctors to encourage or counsel women to have abortions. Instead, it is erecting an obstacle in the path of women seeking full and uncensored medical advice about alternatives to childbirth."

If the Supreme Court overturns the Appeals Court ruling, observers say other state legislatures will be at liberty to pass anti-choice legislation. Mass Choice, a state organization that is pro-choice, issued a statement after the Court's decision was announced: "If the Court allows the restrictions in Webster [the Missouri law], it is in effect reversing its commitment in *Roe v. Wade* to protect women's constitutional

right to choose abortion and opens a Pandora's box of other restrictions to that right."

Shelley Mains, an abortion rights activist with Boston's Reproductive Rights Network (R2N2), told *GCN* that pro-choice forces must look not only to the Supreme Court's actions. "While there is a very real threat that the legal right to abortion may be overturned by the Supreme Court, it would be wrong to focus only on whether *Roe v. Wade* will survive. Many other aspects of reproductive rights have been and continue to be eroded — especially in the area of funding. As fewer and fewer women have access to abortion because funding is cut off, the legal right to abortion will essentially be gutted. We've got to start organizing to stand up for abortion rights across the board, not just worry about *Roe v. Wade*," said Mains.

Although the Court has upheld *Roe v. Wade* twice — in 1983 and 1986 — this is the first challenge to abortion rights that will be decided by a court thought to be composed of a majority of abortion foes. Since the last challenge in 1986, Anthony Kennedy, a conservative Reagan appointee thought to be opposed to abortion, has replaced Lewis Powell on the Court. Powell voted with the 5-4 majority in 1986.

□filed from Boston



## Boston queers blast State of the State

*Dukakis rapped for incompetence, indifference*

By Chris Bull

BOSTON — While Gov. Michael Dukakis was inside the State House calling for tax increases to combat the state's \$600 million deficit, 150 lesbians and gay men withstood sub-zero weather outside the building Jan. 5 to deliver their own "State of the State" message.

"The state of the state is more than a budget crisis — [it is] a human crisis in HIV testing and insurance; in AIDS treatment and research; and in AIDS education and prevention. It's a civil rights crisis, a foster care crisis and a health care crisis," stated literature by the local lesbian/gay activist group MASS ACT OUT. Members of the group said they organized the protest Jan. 1 after Dukakis refused to meet with them to

discuss several issues, including: the Massachusetts gay rights bill, which died in the state legislature for the sixteenth year in a row; his four-year-old anti-lesbian and gay foster care policy; and his failure to take a leadership role in the fight against AIDS in Massachusetts.

A spokesperson for Dukakis, James Dorsey, declined to comment on the governor's refusal to meet with ACT OUT.

"We invited you here because the Duke didn't. We're making our agenda public because he hasn't," shouted Judy Andler of ACT OUT. She pointed out that New York has an AIDS discrimination unit already in place as well as a lesbian and gay liaison,

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Mass. State of the State address, Jan. 5





Martin Luther King, Jr. with Ralph Abernathy

### Quote of the week

"The power and beauty of the movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr. was rooted in the high visibility and strong voices of those most oppressed by racial prejudice. The hope today for Black lesbians and gays lies in how effectively we reject invisibility and silence. The dream of equality, freedom and an end to sexual oppression can only come alive when we, Black lesbians and gays, have enough love for ourselves and courage to come out. We must come out without apologies. We must come out knowing that we are rich with the power and pride of the full truth about who we are, how we live and whom we love."

— Renee McCoy, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays, speaking to GCN about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

### Other news from the Supremes

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court decided Jan. 9 to allow criminal defendants to reject potential jurors because of their race, according to a *Boston Globe* report. The case, *Alabama v. Cox*, involves Ku Klux Klan members' allegedly murdering a Black man. According to the *Globe*, the prosecuting attorneys — supported by law enforcement officials nationwide — argued that defense lawyers are unlawfully seeking to impanel an all-white jury in the Alabama trial. The Supreme Court rejected the arguments.

Also on Jan. 9 the High Court decided that it will rule on the constitutionality of a federal law that bans phone sex businesses. The law, which Congress adopted to "protect" minors from accessing the lines, has been challenged in a suit filed by Sable Communications in federal district court. The California-based company has charged that the law violates its freedom of speech rights guaranteed in the First Amendment.

□ Judy Harris

### 'Faces Project' aims to greet Bush

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A woman moved by the loss of a close friend to AIDS has organized a national mail-in project she hopes will send George Bush a loud message from the gay and lesbian community on his first day as president. AIDS activist Nancy Sigafoos is urging people from all across the country to send a letter containing a photo or a photocopy of a photo of a person who has AIDS or who has died of AIDS to the president-elect.

Sigafoos hopes an avalanche of mail will arrive for Bush on Jan. 20 carrying the message: "There are 25 million lesbian and gay Americans who are here for this day and every day of the Bush Administration, and we have needs and concerns that are not being addressed. See us and hear us...we are not going away."

"Not just AIDS issues are at stake," said Sigafoos. "The Sharon Kowalski case also represents gross injustice in terms of gay/lesbian civil rights, as do nameless other instances. I want all people — parents, friends, family and neighbors to speak out for Gay America."

Letters and photographs should be sent to George Bush, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C., 20500. To arrive on Jan. 20, letters should be sent from the West Coast by Jan. 16, from the

Midwest by Jan. 17, from the East Coast by Jan. 18, and from the D.C. area by Jan. 19. For more information about the Faces Project, call (206)753-0097 or write to the Project c/o Dice, 114 N. Capitol Way, Olympia, WA, 98501.

□ Jennie McKnight

### Second annual Black les/gay conference

LOS ANGELES — Activists, politicians and celebrities from across the country will gather in Los Angeles Feb. 17-20 for the Second Annual National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Conference. Sponsored by the year-old Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum (BGLLF), this year's gathering will focus on the theme: "Loving Ourselves, Healing Ourselves, Preparing for the 21st Century."

Performers Chaka Kahn and Jeanne Tracie will take part in a tribute to the singer Sylvester, who recently died of AIDS. Natalie Cole will perform the same night. Whoopi Goldberg will be honored by the group.

The four-day conference will also feature speakers and workshop presenters who are political and civil rights leaders from organizations in the Black gay and lesbian community. Among the speakers will be: Gil Gerald of the National AIDS Network, Renee McCoy of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays, Rev. Carl Beam of the Minority AIDS Project in Los Angeles, and Warren Hewett of the federal Office of Minority Health.

A day-long training for people doing AIDS work, called the AIDS Institute, will



Gil Gerard

take place Feb. 17, and a leadership roundtable will convene Feb. 20 for representatives of local, regional and national les/gay organizations.

Registration for the Conference and AIDS Institute is \$100; Conference only, \$70; Institute only, \$50. For more information about the Conference and related events, contact BGLLF at P.O. Box 29812, Los Angeles, CA 90027, or call (213)667-2549.

□ Jennie McKnight

### Seeking prisoner contributions

BOULDER, Colo. — The Spring 1989 issue of *Issues in Radical Therapy: New Studies on the Left* will be devoted to topics concerning prisoners, the prison system, and the reform/resistance movements. The editors are hoping that most of the material will be contributed by people who are or have been imprisoned, and they are especially interested in contributions from women prisoners. Articles, poetry and artwork are needed by the end of February to be considered for the issue. Typewritten material is preferred, but legible longhand is fine. All submissions will be acknowledged.

Gay and lesbian issues need to be included in this special issue. Please send your contribution to: Saxifrage Publications Group, 1484 Wicklow, Boulder, CO 80303.

□ Mike Riegle

As part of GCN's efforts to increase its coverage of AIDS medical and treatment issues, we plan to regularly publish "AIDS Treatment Notes." Most of the information here comes from newsletters written and published by people with AIDS (PWAs), people with ARC (PWARCs) and other AIDS activists.

Many of these newsletters print disclaimers withholding their endorsement from any particular treatment options. Like these other sources, GCN provides medical information to encourage discussion about the politics of health and medicine and to help people make personal decisions about AIDS treatments. We do not endorse any specific treatment or study.

### End of road for PWA Coalition?

NEW YORK — According to the January 1989 edition of *PWA Coalition Newsline*, the New York PWA Coalition is in a desperate financial crisis. The cover of newsletter features a headline stating "Warning: This May Be The Last PWA Newsline You'll Ever Hold In Your Hands."

In addition to publishing the *Newsline*, which contains articles, resource guides and medical updates by and for PWAs, the PWA Coalition provides a number of important services for PWAs. The organization depends upon donations to raise money for its \$1 million dollar annual budget. Less than 10 percent of its budget comes from grants. "If you believe in self-empowerment for people with AIDS and want to see the organization which promotes this philosophy continue, now is the time to help us," states *Newsline*.

Donations to the PWA Coalition may be sent to 31 West 26th Street, New York, NY, 10010. Subscriptions to *Newsline* are available from the same address free to PWAs and for \$20 to "healthy, concerned friends."

*Newsline* editor Michael Callen recently edited the second volume of the PWA resource book *Surviving and Thriving With AIDS: Collected Wisdom*, as well as a new publication entitled *AIDS Forum: Collected Wisdom* features a number of articles and photographs from the last year of *Newsline*. The first issue of *AIDS Forum* published by Callen's Significant Other press, contains two articles by Joseph Sonabend, a physician who works with many PWAs, a critique of AZT clinical trials and an article about community-based treatment research. Volume two of *Surviving and Thriving With AIDS* may be ordered from the PWA Coalition for \$20 and free to PWAs. The first issue of *AIDS Forum* is available free of charge from Significant Other, Inc. P.O. Box 1545, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. Typewritten, double-space manuscripts are also requested.

□ Chris Bull

### AIDS-phobia study seeks participants

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — A Yale University psychologist, Christian Crandall, is seeking participants for a study on the impact of AIDS-phobia and stigma on people with AIDS or ARC or who are HIV antibody positive. Participants in the study need only to fill out a short, completely anonymous questionnaire.

People with AIDS, ARC or who are HIV antibody positive who would like to participate should call collect to receive a questionnaire by mail. Contact Robert Coleman at (203) 772-3019.

□ Jennie McKnight

### Trial openings in Boston area

BOSTON — Listed below are several clinical trials for AIDS treatments underway at local medical facilities. The information is condensed from updates published by Boston's AIDS Action Committee:

#### • Soluble CD4 trial at Mass. General

Soluble CD4 is a treatment that has generated much excitement although there is not much clinical data available. In test tubes, the soluble CD4 binds to receptors on

the body's CD4 cells, thereby preventing HIV from binding to these cells. William Hazeltine of Harvard University has argued that infected cells often bind to uninfected cells and kill them. Soluble CD4 interferes with this process.

No bad side effects have been found in animal studies of this treatment. A Phase I (toxicity) escalating dose trial, lasting 28 days per person, has begun at Mass. General Hospital. Due to FDA regulations, participants will need to be inpatient for the 28 days, although they will be free to come and go from the hospital, similar to a hotel. The CD4 will be administered by an intramuscular injection every eight hours for the 28 days. Participants should be people with AIDS or severe ARC (T-cell count below 400). The study is short so that participants can resume using drugs with known efficacy. For more information on this study, contact Terri Flynn at (617) 726-3819.

#### • Beta Interferon and AZT at Boston City Hospital

This is an open-ended (continuing indefinitely) trial with a minimum of a six-month commitment. People will be randomly assigned to differing dose levels. The Beta Interferon appears to have antiviral properties and is less hematologically toxic than other antiviral agents that have been tested. The researchers especially seek participants who have taken AZT but have had to reduce their dosage due to bone marrow suppression. Participants will need to go to Boston City Hospital weekly during the first four weeks, every other week during the following five to 13 weeks, and every four weeks from week 14 on. For more information, contact Howard Liebman at (617) 424-4290.

#### • Women's epidemiological study

A five-year study of the natural progression of HIV in women, and in prenatal outcome is going on in Boston, Chicago and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Researchers seek participants who are women at risk of HIV infection, women who are infected, and women who are sick. For information, contact Debbie Cotton at (617) 735-2249.

#### • Dextran sulfate at U. Mass/Worcester

Dextran sulfate, an over-the-counter drug in Japan used for lowering cholesterol, is being explored in the U.S. as an agent that could block the spread of HIV from cell to cell. Test tube studies indicate that dextran sulfate interferes with viral penetration in cell to cell transfer. In a recent toxicity trial, of 20-30 people who were HIV-infected, some experienced side effects — including bloating, elevated liver function levels, and decreased white cell counts. There was no significant change in P24 levels (P24 currently is being used as a marker for level of viral activity). However, large numbers of PWAs have reported feeling better on the drug, so the study is continuing.

The U. Mass study is a combination toxicity and efficacy trial. Three dose levels will be administered to 10 HIV-antibody positive people, 10 people with ARC and 10 with AIDS. This is a six-month study. Participants must not have been on antiviral therapy (such as AZT) for at least 30 days. During the first 12 weeks, participants would need to travel to U. Mass every two weeks, and monthly thereafter.

□ Laurie Novick

#### PWA newsletters:

*Treatment News*, GMHC Department of Medical Information, 132 West 24th Street, Box 274, New York, NY 10011

*AIDS Treatment News*, Box 411256, San Francisco, CA 94141

*PWA Coalition Newsline*, 263A West 19th Street, Room 125, New York, NY 10011

*Alert*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029

*The Body Positive* 263A West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011



## Midshipman

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After leaving the Academy in 1987, Steffan moved back to Minnesota where he works for a computer software company. In an interview with *GCN*, Steffan said he would like to re-enlist in the military, "I would go back if I could. I don't believe the entire military is flawed. It is simply wrong on this issue. The military serves an important function. But there is much prejudice against gays in the military, and I hope my case will help change this policy."

Steffan said that he knows many gay men and lesbians in the military. "You simply learn to keep your private life separate from your career. It's not very fair, but it's just the way things are right now. Many just get used to it." He said he had told a "few close friends" that he is gay and that he suspects the word got around until someone "decided to write a letter" to the Academy, which prompted the investigation. "[When] most people I know found out, [they] were very supportive of me. It didn't seem to change anyone's opinion of me — at least among those who know me."

"I would just like it if the military was as accepting of homosexuality as most civilian employers. Many businesses — especially the business I am in [computers] — make it a policy not to discriminate because they know many of their best workers are gay."



Joseph Steffan

But the military has been lagging behind for years.... It has been estimated that 37 percent of people in the military are involved in homosexual acts at one time or another. But they are not concerned about that. They don't punish you for the act, but for your very identity, which is contrary to the Constitution."

□ filed from Boston

## ACT UP/Boston zaps Hancock at benefit screening

*Company's sponsorship of Mother, Mother called "public relations ploy"*

By Judy Harris

BOSTON — ACT UP/Boston greeted the guests and stars who attended the Jan. 6 "world premiere" of the film *Mother, Mother* with leaflets entitled "A Word About Your Sponsor..." — the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company. The showing of the film about a person with AIDS (PWA) and his mother was being held as a fundraiser for Boston's AIDS Action Committee (AAC). ACT UP members told *GCN* they support AAC's fundraising efforts. They said, however, that John Hancock's sponsorship of the film was a public relations ploy to divert attention from the company's refusal to reimburse clients for aerosolized pentamidine (AP) when prescribed to prevent pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) — the leading cause of death among PWAs. Although Hancock does cover the drug as both a treatment and prophylaxis for PCP after the client has survived one case of PCP, ACT UP is critical of the company's policy because one-fourth of PWAs who get PCP die during their first bout.

Larry Kessler, executive director of AAC, told *GCN* he supported ACT UP's decision to demonstrate at the showing, saying, "We [at AAC] think information is always in season." Addressing the audience of over 1,100 people who packed John Hancock Hall to view the 30-minute Hollywood production, Kessler said, "I applaud John Hancock's leadership in the corporate community advocating education and support for persons with AIDS. The company's commitment to AIDS education sets an example which we all hope other corporations will follow." Kessler later told *GCN* that he hoped Hancock's "leadership" will extend to their decisions to cover AP and other experimental drugs.

ACT UP/Boston's leaflet stated that "leadership, to be credible, must be consistent. Sponsoring a movie is a safe (and tax-deductible) way to create the illusion of 'leadership' in the fight against AIDS."

And although ACT UP members said they were not protesting the film itself, one activist carried a sign reading "Too Little, Too Late" during the protest — a reference to film director Micki Dickoff's earlier

award-winning documentary about family and friends of (PWAs).

According to ACT UP member Steven Busby, the group originally planned to zap not only John Hancock but also AAC until Kessler agreed to release a statement addressing John Hancock's refusal to cover AP. The statement explained that John Hancock's decision not to provide full coverage for AP was in part due to "the dilemma that John Hancock and other insurance companies face...as more experimental drugs become available and may not yet be fully sanctioned by the FDA or be scientifically proven and documented in clear clinical trials or in one of the respected journals."

Kessler's statement also noted that Bay State Health Care, Harvard Community Health Plan, Medicaid, and Medicare all cover AP as primary prophylaxis — meaning, before the first bout of PCP. Blue Cross/Blue Shield, John Hancock's major competitor in Massachusetts, also covers AP as a primary prophylaxis.

Hancock spokesperson Ralph Brunner said the company is constantly reviewing its coverage policy but that it has no plans to begin covering AP as a primary prophylaxis. According to Brunner, the insurance company is "very open to new medical evidence that AP might be safe and effective for prophylactic use."

The Jan. 6 demonstration was ACT UP's third demonstration against John Hancock since October, and members say they will continue to target the company until its policy is changed to provide full coverage for AP.

AAC received \$12,000 from the premiere night screening and reception with the *Mother, Mother* producers and cast. *Mother, Mother* fundraisers are also planned for Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and New York, after which the film will be distributed to AIDS organizations around the country for educational and fundraising purposes. It will also be distributed to schools for use as an educational tool. All proceeds from *Mother, Mother* are to benefit nonprofit AIDS organizations. (See review of *Mother, Mother* in this issue, p. 6.) □

## Naked man found dead in Boston Fens

*While it appears that the man was not gay, homophobia may have played a role in his death*

By Marc Stein

BOSTON — Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the death of an unidentified white male found by ice skaters on Jan. 11 in the Fens, a local cruising area frequented by gay men. Boston Police spokesperson Thomas Santry said the naked body was found under ice in the Muddy River behind Boston Fire Alarm headquarters around 1:30 p.m.

While the death is currently classified as a "sudden death," the medical examiner's office is conducting an autopsy, which is expected to be completed within several days. Ann Sanders, Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn's liaison to the gay and lesbian community, said that her office had received a number of telephone calls about the death, but believed the incident was isolated. "From the people I have talked to, I don't think this has anything to do with gay-

bashing or gay-related incidents in the Fenway," Sanders told *GCN*.

A Boston Police Informational Services spokesperson said that if the victim is found to have been gay and the death is ruled a homicide, his sexual identity will "definitely be a factor in the investigation."

The spokesperson added that the man "could have died of a heart attack" or "could have been drunk, taken off all his clothes and jumped in the water. It's too early to determine."

Whether or not the man was gay, it is possible that he was perceived as gay and was the victim of an attack motivated by homophobia. Joyce Collier, coordinator of the Fenway Community Health Center's Victim Recovery Program, said "Sometimes we just don't know if violence is anti-gay or not." □

## Robert B. Bessette, Jr. dies of AIDS

By Jose Gonzalez

BOSTON — Bob Bessette, 35, died Dec. 3, 1988, at his home in the South End, from complications due to AIDS.

Bob was born and raised in Burlington, Vermont. A 1971 graduate of Winooski High School in Vermont, he attended Johnson State College in Vermont. After college, Bob served in the U.S. Navy and then moved to San Francisco where he worked in the Department of Agriculture for six years. In 1981, Bob moved to Boston where he lived for four years. Bob relocated to Chicago for a brief period of time, but then returned to Boston where he had lived for the past three years. Most recently, Bob had been employed as an administrator for Habit Management Institute of Boston.

Bob leaves his lover, Jose Gonzalez of the South End; his parents, Bob and Helen Bessette of Burlington, Vermont; two sisters, Julie Gigure, of Burlington, Vermont and Suellen Lundy of Wialua, Hawaii; four brothers, Timothy Bessette, Jon Bessette, Jay Bessette, and Bradley Bessette, all of Burlington, Vermont; and longtime friend Anna Vanni of Cambridge, Mass.



A Memorial Celebration, to be held in the early spring in Boston, is being planned by his lover and friends.

Donations may be made in Bob's name to Hospice Mission Hill, c/o Hospice West of Waltham, MA 02154. □

## State

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Virginia Apuzzo, who helped draft New York Gov. Mario Cuomo's State of the State address. Massachusetts under Dukakis has not been nearly as responsive to the needs of the community, Andler said. "During his presidential campaign Dukakis used the language of making hard economic choices rather than talk about human needs or challenging the callousness of the Reagan years himself." Andler was followed by a number of other activists addressing the protesters who huddled together to ward off the bitter cold. Derek Link, also of ACT OUT, lambasted Dukakis for ignoring a recent Mass. Supreme Judicial Court decision allowing insurance companies to test applicants for antibodies to HIV. "His silence is telling us he supports an [insurance] industry which violates its own guidelines by using sexual orientation as a basis for providing coverage. We can't have a leader who believes that ignoring the health crisis is an enlightened response. We must lobby, we must demonstrate, and we must never become complacent with the little we are given by Dukakis, because his silence is our death."

Stephen Busby, a member of ACT UP/BOSTON, quoted Dukakis aide Cathy Dunam, director of the executive office of Human Services, who recently told ACT UP that the administration is "not malevolent, just incompetent," when it comes to addressing the AIDS crisis. "I hope we hear no more from the governor about how leadership is a matter of competence and not ideology, because he has no ideology and he is incompetent and that is why he lost the election," said Busby. He explained that after last year's demonstration in front of

the governor's house, Dukakis officials promised ACT UP they would begin long-range planning to combat the epidemic. "But after two weeks the person in charge of planning quit and he was never replaced," said Busby.

MASS ACT OUT members urged protesters to join the vigil in support of the gay rights bill which is being held in front of the State House daily at 5:30. Andler said the group has not ruled out civil disobedience as a tactic if the bill fails to move rapidly through committees. Rob Gale, also of ACT OUT, told *GCN* he believes the bill will pass this year. "We are starting earlier and taking a more pro-active approach to the bill. In the past we have tended to be distracted by other issues or have only reacted to the legislature," said Gale.

Rosemary White, liaison to the lesbian and gay community for newly-elected state Rep. Alvin Thompson (D-Cambridge), told *GCN* Thompson would work hard with other supportive legislators such as state Sen. Michael Barrett and state Rep. Mark Roosevelt (D-Beacon Hill) for the bill this year. "He'll be very vocal. As far as I know he is the first rep to have a gay liaison. He's going to push hard for the bill," said White.

The demonstration ended on an emotional note when ACT OUT member Fred Fenari read a memorial statement for Patrick Grace, an AIDS activist who recently died of AIDS. "I don't know how to end a eulogy. A moment of silence or a prayer usually seems appropriate, but Patrick always equated silence with death and you know we're not going to die. So I want you all to join me in sending Patrick off with a howl, a scream of life and hope and pride: Action equals life, Silence equals death." □



## Here's Joan (and Joan)

Two dates with two Joans! And both will benefit GCN!

First, on Saturday, Jan. 21, GCN presents "For Love and For Life: The 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights," a multi-image slide show by Joan E. Biren (JEB). Capture the spirit of our community's largest mobilization at Harvard's wheelchair accessible Paine Hall. The show will be sign language interpreted. Time: 8:00pm. Cost: \$6-10 sliding scale. Info: (617) 426-4469 and tty 426-0332.

Then, on Feb. 10, spend "An Evening with Joan Nestle," celebrated author of **A Restricted Country** and cofounder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Time and location to be announced.

## Membership Meetings

For all of you lucky 200 GCN members out there, mark your calendars for these two dates:

Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6:30pm — Monthly membership meeting. Agenda includes GCN's personnel policy, the hiring process for the news positions, the future development of the art position and a 1989 promotions strategy.

Wednesday, Jan. 18, 6:00pm — Hiring committee(s) for the News Editor and National Reporter/Circulation positions will be formed. We encourage in particular People of Color and working class people within the membership to attend.

To become a GCN member, visit our offices at 62 Berkeley Street and become an active volunteer.

## Job openings News Editor News Reporter/Circulation Coordinator Promotions/Classified Advertising

**News Editor:** Coordinate and edit the work of staff and volunteer reporters covering local, national and international events of importance to the lesbian and gay community. Write news stories as necessary. Participate in layout and production of the paper. Qualifications: Strong writing ability and editing skills, ability to work with others, strong organizational skills, ability to work with deadlines, knowledge of lesbian and gay issues. Deadline for application: January 27.

**News Reporter/Circulation Coordinator:** Research, investigate and write weekly news stories, primarily about national issues, and, as necessary, stories about Boston/New England. Share responsibility for coordinating weekly mailings of GCN to all subscribers and maintaining computerized subscription list. Qualifications: Strong writing ability, ability to work with deadlines, knowledge of lesbian and gay issues, ability to work well with volunteers, knowledge of computers, attention to detail. Deadline for application: January 27.

**Promotions/Classified Advertising:** Use direct mail marketing, exchange advertising, free distribution, renewal campaigns and other strategies to increase paid circulation of GCN. Log and process weekly classified advertising. Qualifications: Strong writing, administrative, creative and organizational skills. Experience in marketing, design or public relations a plus. Deadline for application: January 17.

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All GCN positions require a commitment to lesbian/gay liberation, feminism, anti-racism, an awareness of class issues and a commitment to collective decision making.

**Salary/Benefits:** All positions pay \$200/week and include eligibility for health insurance, routine health care through Fenway Community Health Center, dental benefits, paid sick leave and four weeks annual paid vacation. GCN offers staff members responsibility for their own jobs with flexibility and ample room for innovation.

To apply, please send resume, cover letter and writing samples to GCN Job Search Committee, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Lesbians and gay men of color are particularly encouraged to apply.

"Community Voices" and "Speaking Out" are parts of our efforts to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings and comments to us, and to respond to ideas expressed in this space. We welcome all contributions except personal attacks. Copies of letters and "Speaking Out" contributions sent elsewhere are printed on a space-available basis. GCN reserves the right to edit letters and "Speaking Out" contributions for length and clarity, in consultation with the author. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership.

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## African Libraries

Dear GCN:

I hope I may use *Community Voices* as a forum to bring my newly published book *African Libraries* to the attention of my black brothers and sisters, as well as to anyone else interested in Africa or Black culture. The book is an important cultural event for Africa. And, though the focus is on libraries, the book may well be of interest to persons interested in Black culture, social studies and architecture. It will be of prime interest to those involved in African or comparative librarianship, reference work or African studies.

The book's five parts provide comprehensive information on the history and current situation of libraries in Sub-Sahara Africa. Part One (90 photographs, with commentary) presents a pictorial overview of libraries in all regions of the Sub-Sahara. Part Two, through a chronology of library and library-related events, 1773-1984, presents a skeletal history of the development of libraries — and to some extent printing — in the Sub-Sahara.

Part Three is a bibliographical essay that traces the development of the literature of librarianship in the Sub-Sahara, 1950-1980, from a time when no Africans were writing about their own libraries to a time that African librarians had become dominant in their own literature. Part Four brings together factual information about libraries, status of education, literacy rates, and populations for 46 African countries. This compilation goes beyond any similar publication. Part Five is a bibliography of library and library-related literature for the Sub-Sahara, 1926-1985.

*African Libraries* was published by Scarecrow Press (Box 4167, Metuchen, N.J. 08840). The price is \$49.50 plus \$3.00 postage and handling. I do not expect readers of GCN to buy this expensive book (unless someone happens to have an interest). I do hope, however, that readers interested in Black culture may influence their libraries to buy it for their reference departments. This book is an important publication in its field. Perhaps, because the author is gay the book could also be considered a gay event. In any case, I want to bring *African Libraries* to the attention of readers who would never see a book review in a library journal.

Glenn L. Sitzman  
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

## No passion, no statement

Dear GCN:

Almodovar's *Law of Desire* was a delight. For months I was looking forward to seeing *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. What a disappointment. The GCN review had the headline: *Passion Statement*. Almodovar's latest has no passion and no statement to make. After the magnificent opening credits is a lot of hollow, recycled humor.

Who needs more ridiculous female characters doing ridiculous things? So much for Spain's revolutionary new filmmaker.

Monica Hileman  
Somerville, Mass.

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Gay Community News is published weekly (except the last week of April, August and December), by the Bromfield Street Educational Foundation, Inc., a non-profit corporation. Our office is located at 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116. (617) 426-4469, TTY/TDD 426-0332.

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Mass. Annual subscription rate is \$33. Institutional rate: \$40. ISSN. [0147-0728] Member Gay and Lesbian Press Association, New England Press Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, COSMEP member.

GCN is included in the Alternative Press Index, published quarterly by the Alternative Press Center, Inc., Box 33109, Baltimore, MD 21218.

Volumes 1-15 of GCN are available on microfilm for \$40/volume, \$550/complete set. Write GCN/Microfilm for more information.

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# Making communities safe for battered lesbians

By Debra Borkovitz

Some of the ideas in Beth Zemsky's Speaking Out [GCN Dec. 4-10, 1988] contradict my experiences with lesbian battering. Her article seems intended to be an overview of lesbian battering, but it is very definitely focused on the batterer. The portion of the article that's directed toward the community draws parallels between how we must help both women who have abused and women who have been abused. Zemsky urges that we not ostracize batterers because in doing so we replicate the patterns of our abusive culture, which in racism, sexism, etc., designates some people as "other" and

*...there's an underlying assumption that lesbian battering really isn't as bad, that lesbian batterers, unlike male batterers, want to change and with a little help can easily do so. Feminists do not tell straight women that they shouldn't ostracize their batterers, we do not hesitate to label men batterers, and we do not tell a battered straight woman that she too has the potential to batter.*

objectifies them. She states that since batterers choose to batter we all have the potential to be batterers, batterers can change, and thus there is no "us" and "them." She challenges us to find creative ways to hold batterers accountable, but offers no practical suggestions, other than saying that we need to listen to both batterers and victims/survivors.

Finding ways to listen to battered lesbians and to batterers are very different tasks, however, because battered lesbians have been terrorized into silence by batterers. Personally, I spent almost a year listening to the voice of a batterer, and after two years without seeing her, it is still terrifying to speak about it to strangers. If I am at a community event and my batterer is there, one of us will have to leave. Since she probably won't, most likely it'll be me. In effect, I am the one who is ostracized. To say that I should stay is to trivialize my experience. Should anyone have to be in the same room (let alone socialize) with someone who has stolen from, abused, harassed, attacked, and could have killed them?

I believe that the woman who did this to me did it not because she is evil, but because of a combination of abuse in her past and decisions she made at the time of the relationship. While she is not responsible for the abuse that was inflicted upon her, she is responsible for responding to it by inflicting abuse upon others. I also believe that she could change, and I hope she does. I don't, however, ever want her in my life again. She could change, but how would I know? It would take more than her announcing she'd turned over a new leaf (which happened about every three days during our relationship). It would take more than a therapist assuring me that she wasn't abusive anymore. It would take putting myself at risk to see how she behaves when we are alone, and I would never voluntarily subject myself to that again. If accountability is to mean anything, it must mean realizing that past actions have consequences which can last a lifetime.

Even though the article explicitly states that lesbian battering is as bad as heterosexual battering, it feels to me like there's an underlying assumption that lesbian battering really isn't as bad, that lesbian batterers, unlike male batterers, want to change and with a little help can easily do so. Feminists do not tell straight women that they shouldn't ostracize their batterers, we do not hesitate to label men batterers, and we do not tell a battered straight woman that she too has the potential to batter. It has been the experience of the battered women's movement that very few male batterers change, and at this moment, a belief that female batterers will change *en masse*

amounts to wishful thinking and little else.

In addition, it has been my experience that very few women who haven't been battered truly believe that it could happen to them. This attitude creates an "us" and a "them" with the "them" being lesbians who have been/could be battered. It also creates a situation in which it is hard for battered lesbians to speak, because so many lesbians do not want to hear what we have to say, and because we don't want to become one of the pathetic "thems" who was weak enough to get abused by a woman. But when we do speak, we find others who share our pain, our silence, our terror, and we realize how strong we are.

Often, when we do speak, we risk our homes, our peace, and our lives, and right now, this is the bottom line. It is simply not safe for the majority of battered/formerly battered lesbians to speak about our experiences. It is not safe because we cannot count on the police to protect us, we usually cannot count on our families to help us, and in general, our communities (if we have them — some women know no lesbians other than their batterers) are only marginally interested in finding ways to make us safe. If we go to a shelter, our batterer may have friends on the staff. If we go to another city and get involved with a community there, we can count on there being connections. If we hide, it sure feels like we've been ostracized.

I am writing this only because I assess my physical risk to be low. No one I know has seen my batterer for two years, I have no children, I know other formerly battered lesbians who can support me, I have friends

who would help me if she came back into my life, and I am out at work and to my family. If any one of these statements wasn't true, I would not write this. It simply wouldn't be worth the risk. For the vast majority of battered lesbians, it isn't worth the risk. Their batterers have threatened to come out for them at work, or are still threatening to hurt them, or they have no support, or they are worried about their children, etc. I am also writing this because other survivors of lesbian battering have already risked speaking out, and have created the first possibility of safety.

I get tired of the "We all could abuse or be abused" or "We all have the potential to be Hitler or Mother Teresa" kinds of arguments. Sure, they might be true, but so what? It doesn't mean Hitler and Mother Teresa or batterers and victims are indistinguishable. For me to label the woman who abused me as "my batterer" is not to say that this is her primary and permanent identity, but merely to acknowledge our relationship and the differences in our actions. I am making her an "other," but I don't find this akin to the dominant culture's creation of "isms." The problem of any oppression lies in denying the humanity of others (objectifying) not in recognizing that there are differences between men and women, Jews and gentiles, etc., or women who've battered, women who've been battered, and women who've experienced neither or both. I see very little evidence of an emerging "battererism" coming out of naming these differences. Excluding unaccountable batterers is more like excluding unaccountable anti-semites than like being anti-semitic.

When I see more discussion and concrete action toward making our communities safe for battered lesbians, then I will have more patience for theoretical arguments about how a community should avoid alienating batterers. It's a lot easier to call battering a "challenge" that we can meet by simultaneously acknowledging batterers and battered lesbians and carefully avoiding any "us's" or "them's," than to truly acknowledge how unsafe our communities are, how bad lesbian battering really is, how many of us have been and could be battered, and how far apart the theoretical and practical answers are. Perhaps what bothered me most about the article was the attempt at injecting an upbeat strain to it. To me, lesbian battering is a challenge the way getting hit by a Mack truck would be a challenge — if I survived, I'd undoubtedly learn from the experience, but there's nothing upbeat about it.

If we are willing to eliminate battering in our communities, we must start by making them safe for battered lesbians, so that battered lesbians can lead the effort to eliminate battering. We have to be willing to demand that batterers be held accountable for their behavior, by not supporting this behavior, and by choosing the safety of the victim/survivor over the possible alienation of the batterer. The more safety that is created for battered lesbians so that we can speak about our experiences to each other and the community, the more answers we will begin to find, and then maybe we will be able to focus community strategy on batterers without effectively silencing and ignoring their victims.

## Organizing to end battering

By Beth Leventhal

I am an advocate for battered women, both lesbian and straight, and a survivor of lesbian battering. I am writing in response to Beth Zemsky's Speaking Out on lesbian battering [GCN, Dec. 4-10, 1988], an edited version of a Take Back the Night speech.

Aren't Take Back the Night events meant to name the different forms of violence against women and support the survivors of those abuses? Since when do speeches focus on abusers? Would we ever permit a speech from someone working with men who batter in which they suggest that we do not shun those men because it "falsely creates 'us' and 'them' categories" and "minimizes the potential we all have to choose to be abusive?" Would any speaker dare to insult rape survivors with the suggestion that we not ostracize male rapists, since it will "make it more difficult for [them] to 'own' their behavior because 'owning' it would mean being one of 'them' and being shamed and ostracized?" So why should battered lesbians, whose experiences of violence and abuse rival that dished out by any man, be subjected to such disrespect?

My own reaction to reading the speech was primarily one of anger. Anger that while Ms. Zemsky reminds us that we learned about other forms of violence against women by listening to survivors, she believes we must also listen to batterers to learn about lesbian battering. Anger that when so little has been said, written or done in support of battered lesbians, here is a speech urging that we not ostracize batterers. Anger that someone who does not identify as a survivor is telling us the directions our communities should or should not take toward holding batterers accountable.

I also found Ms. Zemsky's "message of hope" to batterers to be misleading to their battered partners. I agree that batterers *can* change, but most of them don't. Change would require taking full responsibility for their abusiveness and making a sustained commitment to behaving differently. Out of the 40 or so battered lesbians I know, I have yet to hear of a batterer who has managed to do that. It is rare for batterers to even acknowledge they have a problem. Their abusiveness so effectively gives them the power and control they want over their partners that they have no desire to change. Most batterers I know of have continued to blame, harass, threaten and injure their lovers and ex-lovers, despite promises to

change or leave them alone; they have also gone on to abuse future lovers.

So I am skeptical when Ms. Zemsky says she knows abusive women who "are now able to live abuse-free lives." How does she know this? Is she in periodic touch with the batterer's former and current lovers to monitor whether she is abusing or harassing them in any way? Has the batterer simply stopped her physical violence, or has she changed *all* of the ways she is abusive and

*There has not been enough safe space, both literal and figurative, for battered lesbians to get together, share our experiences and develop an analysis of lesbian battering and strategies to end it.*

controlling? How is she accountable to her battered partner(s)? There may be lesbian batterers who are doing the constant work needed to stop their abusiveness. Some abusive men change too, but 95 percent of them don't, and I have yet to see anything that would leave me more optimistic about lesbian batterers. Without stating this larger context, I believe that Ms. Zemsky offers battered lesbians false hope. While it is possible for batterers to change, it is not very likely to happen.

As to the question of ostracism of batterers, I know that if the woman who abused me were still in the area, I would be the one who was ostracized, by default. I would avoid where we used to grocery shop, eat, go out, etc. so as to avoid running into her. I would not feel safe going to events where she might show up. I would be afraid to speak out as a survivor, for fear of retribution. For many battered lesbians, moving offers the only opportunity for safety, but given the size and inter-connectedness of many lesbian communities, even that is no guarantee of freedom. None of the battered lesbians I know have heard of communities that ostracize batterers, but some would consider moving if they do exist. At least there they might feel safe.

When lesbians create women's bars, we

are essentially ostracizing men and straight women. But in so doing, we are not "replicat[ing] the abusive structure of the larger society" nor are we being heterophobic or sexist. We are creating safe space for ourselves, where we can be free from the harassment and abuse of a homophobic and sexist world. Similarly, when an event's publicity says "no batterers allowed," it is to create safe space, where battered lesbians (and the rest of the community as well) can be free from the harassment and abuse of our batterers. Battered lesbians' demands for the physical and emotional safety which is our right and which makes it possible for us to fully participate in our communities do not "create new categories of 'good guys' and 'bad guys,'" nor do they "divide our own community into an 'us' and a 'them.'" If such splits exist, they are a result of our batterers' abusiveness, not our need for safety and accountability.

But perhaps ostracism of batterers is not the best long-term approach to ending lesbian battering. I don't think any of us really know yet. There has not been enough safe space, both literal and figurative, for battered lesbians to get together, share our experiences, and develop an analysis of lesbian battering and strategies to end it. I believe the real challenge facing us is to learn from the battered women's movement, and create the safety and support necessary for battered lesbians to be able to take leadership roles as we organize to end battering in our communities. Only then will we begin to fully understand lesbian battering and respond to it in ways that empower, rather than re-victimize, battered lesbians.

**The opinions expressed in Speaking Outs are those of the authors and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership.**



# The year in women's music and more

From Romanovsky and Phillips to Suede, k.d. lang, Judy Fjell and Sweet Honey in the Rock

By Caroline Foty

Now that the holidays are over, and you no longer need to feel guilty about buying things for yourself, here is an overview of what was best in the musical releases of 1988. (For the record, Michael Callen's *Purple Heart* and Tracy Chapman's first album deserve every word of praise they've received. I'm focusing this piece on music that has garnered somewhat less attention.)

Most music about the political and personal experience of being gay used to be "women's music," produced by and for lesbians. In recent years, however, the most well-known women's music has softened its focus on the lesbian experience, and, catalyzed in part by the impact of AIDS, gay men have stepped to the radical edge of gay activist music. The

## music



Romanovsky and Phillips

work of Romanovsky and Phillips typifies this new musical and political vitality. *Emotional Rollercoaster* (Fresh Fruit), the duo's third album, continues their tradition of illuminating the joys, ironies, and frustrations of being gay. Their light, acoustic sound, reminiscent of Simon and Garfunkel, is easy on the ear, and strikes just the right tone to let the words shine through.

And the words are what make this album. "Straightening Up The House" waxes humorous about the universal experience of preparing for a family visit by removing the evidence, yet gets to the real point of such a situation:

I never should have promised I'd continue  
with this lie  
But Dad was so certain if she found out  
she would die  
But if it's killing anyone I think it's killing  
me  
Cause it tears me up inside to hide my true  
identity  
And asking you to help me makes me feel  
like such a louse

"Give Me A Homosexual" questions the glorification of straight-looking gays:

With so many gay men and so little time  
It never has been an obsession of mine  
To try and pursue heterosexual men  
The ones who are real or the ones who  
pretend  
That kind of facade's not attractive to me  
I like my lovers as queer as can be.

"The Sodomy Song" lays it on the line about the Hardwick decision:

How can anyone disagree  
With the fundamental right to privacy?  
Something intrigues them, I don't know  
what  
Why else would they want to keep track of  
my butt

"Waltz For The New Age" stuffs so many clichés into four verses that even folks who do no more than wear crystals will squirm; and "Family Of Lovers" tells the story of a young boy who doesn't fit in, and finds a home away from home in the acceptance of a gay man much older than he.

The music is always tuneful and often clever, seasoned with stylistic variety (shoobops in the title tune, a touch of klezmer in the "drag rag" "My Mother's Clothes"). Romanovsky and Phillips have plenty to say about being gay, and the dramatic skills to say it in the catchiest way. (And the peppermint-stick color scheme of the cover is just darling.)

While not explicitly directed to women, country singer k.d. lang's *Shadowland* (Sire) is a top-selling hit with women's audiences. (Perhaps the cover photo has something to do with that.) Recently featured in a *TV Guide* article about young women in country music, lang has one of the most gorgeous voices to hit vinyl in years. Imagine the chocolate tones of Karen Carpenter, the wide range of Linda Ronstadt, and the emotional immediacy of Patsy Cline, and you have an idea of lang's impressive talent. The arrangements on this album use the simple instrumentation of traditional country music, in contrast to lang's earlier *Angel With A Lariat*, and provide an ideal setting for her voice. The star-quality hit is sure to be the "Honky Tonk Angels" medley" with guests Brenda Lee, Loretta Lynn, and Kitty Wells. But for a sensuous shivers-up-your-spine experience, nothing tops the album's first cut, "Western Stars." This woman is an incredible singer, a voice to be savored.

A great voice is not what distinguishes Lynn Lavner, but beautiful singing is not the point of her art form. The jacket of her third album, *You Are What You Wear* (Bent Records), labels her "America's most politically incorrect entertainer," and presents her clad from head to foot in leather and blowing soap bubbles. Having gotten her start playing for gay male audiences, who are more inclined to frequent piano bars, she has a campy style unfamiliar to many fans of women's music. But as Romanovsky and Phillips remind us, levity and irony often provide a new perspective on, and a welcome relief from, serious issues, as well as an opportunity to laugh at "in" jokes. Lavner takes a new look at the eternal lesbian love triangle (woman, woman, and "The Cat"), takes us to her "Festive Little Neighborhood" ("The postman said that I could call him Blanche..."), and meditates on being "Politically Correct" ("Having fought the good fight — the F.B.I., the rabid right — I'd hate to be offending other queers"). At the same time she can write a fine serious song, as demonstrated by "For Every One Who Falls," and by the marvelous "Anne Frank," in which a Jewish lesbian remembers a foremother and sees an earlier teaching of the lesson that "Silence = Death." Both of those songs are powerful and well written, and deserve to be performed by many other singers. It is somewhat disconcerting to hear, in a woman artist's otherwise cute hymn to the virtues of "Older Women," the following couplet: "I've a yen for the female whose



Hunter Davis

war has been waged / Like a steak that's been properly seasoned and aged" — woman as piece of meat is not a friendly feminist image. Otherwise, Lavner demonstrates considerably lyric astuteness, reveling in the peculiar textures of gay culture, and she plays a dexterous and dramatic piano. This is an album that will probably find favor with male as well as female audiences.

A more standard pop sound is available on new releases by Hunter Davis and Suede.

Both albums are pleasant, well produced, and for the most part not unusual or exciting, but with one or two stunning cuts that are nearly worth the price of the albums.

Hunter Davis's *Torn* (Redwood) is produced by sister North Carolinian Teresa Trull. On many of the cuts that production is evident in the familiar sound also present on albums Trull produced for herself and Deidre McCalla in recent years, and is generated mostly by the synthesizer keyboard playing of Ray Obiedo combined with backup vocals including Trull and Linda Tillery. Unfortunately, those cuts are the least interesting here. More effective are the "country" songs, less electric in sound, and including the fine fiddles of Laurie Lewis and Daryl Anger as well as adept acoustic guitar playing by Windham Hill artist Mike Marshall. Most of the songs are Davis's originals. "Do You Know?" is a reminder of the lives of the people who work the land. "Arm and A Leg" is a graceful trio for Davis, Cris Williamson, and steel guitar. The show-stopping track is "Infatuation," the blues as written by Adrienne Torf. The piano and background vocals work well together — the Trull-Tillery-Anne Stocking trio knows how to sing the blues — and the song brings from Davis the most exciting singing she does on the album.

Suede, a long-time favorite of D.C.-Baltimore audiences, finally has an album available, *Easily Suede* (Easily Suede Music). She has a warm and expressive voice, and has chosen her material to put that voice through its paces. The arrangements do a lot with a little, and Suede

plays her own acoustic guitar as well as trumpet. She is at her dramatic best in the sexy and insinuating, bluesy songs like "Doncha Wanna Know," which opens with muted trumpet, followed by singing that picks up that tone and attitude. Willie Nelson's "Crazy" shows off the warmer side of her voice, and you'll love it unless you're already "maxed out" on that old chestnut. "The Ones Who Aren't Here" was recorded by Meg Christian on the Carnegie Hall album, and at the time it reminded us of those who didn't dare come out to a gay event. Here, it is dedicated to PWAs, and indeed the words could have been written for such a dedication, speaking as they do of the gains and losses of telling your friends, family, and co-workers the truth about yourself, and allowing us to imagine other reasons people might not be present. Suede's singing is quiet and intimate, and makes the song both painful and comforting, like our memories of the ones who aren't here.

The engineering, by the well-known and experienced Karen Kane, is clean, with overdubbed backup vocals particularly clear and present instead of sounding like they were sung from a cellar. A note, however, to those who buy the cassette: although it's labelled CrO<sup>2</sup>, if you use that setting on your tape equipment the sound becomes muted and dull.

Judy Small, the Australian folksinger with the rich voice and the clever wit, has released her third album in the U.S., *Home Front* (Redwood). It's a fitting continuation of the work she began on *Mothers*,

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Jeff's surprise party in *Mother, Mother*

## Reaching 'the unreachable's'

Micki Dickoff's new film about a PWA and his mother is touching, but only skims the issues

**Mother, Mother.** Directed by Micki Dickoff. Written by Ian Praiser. With Polly Bergen, John Dye, Piper Laurie, and Bess Armstrong. World premiere January 6 in Boston to benefit the Boston AIDS Action Committee.

By Liz Galst

Lesbian filmmaker Micki Dickoff made *Mother, Mother* because she wanted to reach the people she calls "the unreachable's" — you know, those types who think gay men brought AIDS upon themselves. The film is a 30-minute fictional story about the beginnings of a reconciliation between a white gay man with AIDS and his mother.

Dickoff describes the film as something of a miracle. It was pulled together by about 350 volunteer actors, writers, technicians, Foley artists (the people who make sound effects), teamsters, and composers, with the help of a \$55,000 grant from the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company (which has been targeted by ACT UP/Boston for its failure to cover aerosolized pentamidine, an important treatment for pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, the leading killer of PWAs. See news story, p. 3.). Many of the extras are PWAs and their families.

There are many touching moments in Dickoff's film. For example, she quietly details a PWA's daily confrontation with his disease: the checking for inflamed glands,

his constant awareness that he will soon be parted from the people and things he loves.

But, even though I cried from beginning to end, I can't honestly say I felt *Mother, Mother* did justice to the subject of reconciliation between estranged parents and children. In fact, everything in this movie is a little too pat. *Mother, Mother* reminded me of those TV terminal-illness-of-the-week movies, heavy on the schmaltz, short on character development and lacking in any political analysis whatsoever.

The plot goes something like this: Jeff Cutler, portrayed by John Dye, is a lovely, slightly fey man who's just come down with what is so far "a mild case" of AIDS. Four months earlier, Cutler lost his lover Tom to the same disease. Tom's mother, Martha, portrayed by Piper Laurie (a long-time favorite actress of mine) is visiting Jeff in California in order to help him deal with Tom's effects. Martha is the "good mother," the mother (and the mother-in-law) we all wish we had: giving, kind, always putting other peoples' needs first. She comforts Jeff in his grief, but we never see Martha grieve herself.

Anyway, Martha knows about Jeff's non-relationship with his own mother, and she knows the pain of a mother losing her son, so she approaches Jeff's mother Barbara (Polly Bergen) and tells her that if she ever loved her son, now is the time to let him know. Barbara, in case you hadn't guessed,

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# JANUARY book supplement

## 'Oscar Wilde': a model of the biographer's art

And a look at a book about the city that shaped Wilde

Oscar Wilde

Richard Ellmann

Alfred. A. Knopf, New York, 1988

\$11.95 paper, \$24.95 cloth, 680 pp.

Oscar Wilde's London: A Scrapbook of Vices and Virtues 1880-1900

Wolf Von Eckardt, Sander L. Gilman, and J. Edward Chamberlin

Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, N.J., 1987

\$24.95 cloth, 285 pp.

Reviewed by Duncan Mitchel

The Oscar industry grinds on, and its two latest offerings demonstrate the range of its products' quality.

The late Richard Ellmann completed *Oscar Wilde* just before his death in 1987, and while it is neither as exhaustive nor as definitive as his famous biography of James Joyce, this new biography is notable for its warmth, good judgment, and good writing. It is the least homophobic of any book on Wilde by a straight author that I've seen: not just free of amateur psychoanalysis but a bit disdainful of that popular biographical perversion, and downright scornful of the hypocrisy which destroyed Wilde's life and career. Nowadays we ought to be able to take such an attitude for granted, but unfortunately it's still rare enough that Ellmann deserves credit for it.

Ellmann, in fact, writes as an unabashed fan of Wilde, and this makes his book even more refreshing. He has many touching stories to tell about Wilde's generosity and kindness (see especially pp. 412-13), even in areas where other biographers turn up their noses: "What seems to characterize all Wilde's affairs is that he got to know the boys as individuals, treated them handsomely, allowed them to refuse his attentions without becoming rancorous, and did not corrupt them" (390). He praises Wilde's defense of 'Greek love' at his trial: "For once Wilde spoke not wittily but well." Ellmann also credits those courageous souls who in turn helped Wilde when he needed it most. Frank Harris, who is often portrayed

(not entirely without reason) as a major buffoon in books about Wilde, has a shining moment of humanity that makes up for a lot of silliness. Believing that Wilde had not committed the acts of which he was convicted, Harris arranged to borrow a yacht to smuggle him to the Continent. When he told him of his plan, "...Wilde broke out and said, 'You talk with passion and conviction, as if I were innocent.' 'But you are innocent,' said Harris, 'aren't you?' 'No,' said Wilde. 'I thought you knew that all along.' Harris said, 'I did not believe it for a moment.' 'This will make a great difference to you?' asked Wilde, but Harris assured him it would not" (468). There are people today who couldn't rise to so much humanity. By way of contrast, the painter Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones "hoped that Wilde would shoot himself and was disappointed when he did not" (479).

There is one area where Wilde's generosity failed, however, and since no one ever seems to comment on it, I'd like to. Ellmann seems not much bothered by the clear indications that Wilde married because he needed money and public proof of heterosexual normality, and though he was charmed and attracted by Constance Lloyd, he doesn't seem ever to have taken her seriously. He evidently began to neglect her almost at once, first for his rounds of socializing and travel, then for the young men who occupied his real sexual and romantic interest. After Wilde's downfall, "Paul Adam, in *La Revue blanche* of 15 May 1895, argued that Greek love was less harmful than adultery" (482). But Wilde's love for Alfred Douglas was adulterous, to say nothing of all of the hustlers to whom he was apparently rather kinder than he was to his wife and children. While he was in prison, a reconciliation with Constance was arranged with Ellmann seems to think could not have succeeded, but it was forestalled by the return of Douglas and by Constance's death in 1898. I don't doubt that Wilde was so grateful for his wife's willingness to forgive him that he really believed he loved her, and would change his ways forever. But I also doubt that once he'd regained his freedom, he would have allowed boredom to set in. Despite this, Wilde doesn't come off badly compared to his heterosexual contem-



Oscar Wilde

poraries — how many of *them* went to prison for marrying money or neglecting their wives? — or to many gay men and lesbians before and since who've made the mistake of marrying heterosexually to get a hostile society off their backs. The more so if Ellmann is correct that Wilde had no overt sexual experiences with men before his marriage, and some experience with women; that's a classic formula for disastrous self-deception.

It's unfortunate that Wilde was unable to pick up the pieces of his life and career after his imprisonment. He had a social conscience, encouraged by his Irish nationalist mother, and had done some interesting

political writing; he wasn't quite the mindless butterfly he pretended to be. As we watch around us the ominous rise of the same forces that destroyed him, he no longer seems as quaint as he did in the 1970s, and his life has much to teach us. Ellmann's biography is probably the one to read, and now that it's out in paperback it's the one to own: humane, learned, affectionate and smoothly written, *Oscar Wilde* is a model of the biographer's art.

\*\*\*

The idea behind *Oscar Wilde's London* is a good one. "This book is not about Oscar Wilde," the authors assert in the Introduction.

Continued on page B-6

## Nobody's Fool

Potrebenko's bittersweet novel follows its working-class heroine through four decades of change

Sometimes They Sang

Helen Potrebenko

Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, B.C.,

1986

\$6.95 paper, 102pp.

Reviewed by Mara Math

I fell in love with *Sometimes They Sang* through a press release excerpt:

In her 36th year, Odessa Greenway made her 585th job application. This was as a research person for the government to document the unavailability of day care. She was hired for six months.... However, at the end of this job, Odessa was still in her 36th year and on to her 586th, 587th and 588th job applications, and the hard times had not even begun yet. At 600 she burned out, just like that.

With insight and irresistible wryness, Canadian author Helen Potrebenko follows her working-class heroine through four decades of change and political thought. Odessa's odyssey will have a bittersweet familiarity for many women and the easy conversational rhythm will win over even the most non-political reader.

Confused and confined by the strictures of the '50s, Odessa finds little relief in the so-called sexual revolution of the '60s. Odessa is a bit of a naif but she is nobody's fool:

The years changed nothing. All of a sudden [North] American women were supposed to be, instead of always virgins, never virgins. It still had nothing to do with women. Sex was still something they owned but did not experience, only now the thing they owned was supposed to be always available and multiorgasmic.

Originally put off by the women's movement because of "the endless examination of the badness of their personal lives," and certain from her vantage point as the daughter of a Ukrainian mother and a

farmer father that economic revolution is necessary, Odessa is drawn to the New Left. Disgusted by the Left's failure to live up to its own ideals — its rampant sexism, racism [Potrebenko considers Ukrainians a race] and classism — Odessa turns again to feminism.

It was in the women's movement that Odessa came to see she was a part of a society, both in place and in time. She had ancestors (foremothers), she had contemporaries, and together they had a history. It was an awesome realization and one which saved her life. No longer was she a screaming "I," but a part of a continuous "we" without beginning and without end.

Odessa encounters another kind of disappointment in the women's movement when friendship and community are not particularly forthcoming. She moves into a lesbian household, where despite a warm relationship with two of the women, she remains an outsider, the token straight woman in the basement.

In spite of being taught the inferiority of her race, class and sex, she was having to learn to live without making this contempt part of her self-definition. This should have given her some understanding of the personal aspect of coming out as a lesbian. But she never understood the argument that lesbianism was a political rather than a sexual definition...

But perhaps the main reason she could not understand the lesbians' rage and exultation was because she had enough trouble understanding what heterosexuality was supposed to be.

Well, that's a rather weak argument — after all, a failure to grasp heterosexuality is often conducive to lesbianism or to understanding it. Still, Potrebenko at least allows us some distance from Odessa here, distance which would be welcome at a few other points.

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Anne Rice

Victoria Rouse

## Fascination with the forbidden

Anne Rice plays literary top to your bottom in her new vampire novel

### The Queen of the Damned

Anne Rice

Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1988  
\$18.95 cloth, 448pp.

Reviewed by Duncan Mitchel

If you'd already read Anne Rice's previous vampire novels, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), then you very likely were waiting for *The Queen of the Damned*; you probably, in fact, already have finished reading the copy you bought as soon as it appeared in the stores. But suppose you haven't. Suppose that genre fiction in general bores you, or that horror fiction isn't a genre that you like. (This last option is mine, by the way: Rice's vampire novels are almost the only horror fiction I've read. I've never read anything by Stephen King, for instance.) Why should you read *Interview*, *Lestat*, *The Queen of the Damned*?

It's an odd paradox that fantasy fiction, including its ancient grandparent Mythology, always ends up being about reality: imaginary worlds, no matter how outre, are our world. Not all fantasies are interesting or revealing, of course. Hardcore genre fiction is as rigidly conventional as hardcore porn, intended to push certain buttons in its readers without stirring them uncomfortably; fast-food fiction, if you will — predictable, interchangeable, disposable. And it's nothing new. From today's heroic-fantasy tetralogies through 19th-century dime novels to medieval lives of the saints, formula fiction has suckled many a reader. But fantasies can be ironic or critical comments on the world. Consider Orwell's *1984*, which was not only about the future but the present of post-WWII Britain, with its bombed out ruins, rationing, and Cold War politics. Similarly, a humanoid monster is not just an imaginary bogeyman but a distorted portrayal of humanity. As Walter Kendrick pointed out in a 1986 *Village Voice* essay-review which introduced me to *The Vampire Lestat*, vampires since Bram Stoker's *Dracula* have represented human sexuality and sensuality. If those embodiments have been monstrous, that tells us something about our attitudes towards such things. But, Kendrick noted, Stoker's Victorian vampires reflected Victorian fears, desires, and beliefs; Rice has not only updated her vampires but given them a six-thousand-year history — a mirror-history of the world which offers not escape from the human dilemma but confrontation with it:

"There is so much talk in this century of the nobility of the savage," [Marius] explained, "of the corrupting force of civilization, of the way we must find our way back to the innocence that has been lost. Well, it's all nonsense really. Truly primitive people can be monstrous in their assumptions and expectations. They cannot conceive of innocence. Neither can children. But civilization has at last created men who behave innocently. For the first time they look about themselves and say, 'What the hell is all this!' ... To be godless is probably the first step to innocence," he said, "to lose the sense of sin and subordination, the false grief for

things supposed to be lost."

"So by innocence [said Lestat] you mean not an absence of experience, but an absence of illusions."

"An absence of need for illusions," he said. "A love of and respect for what is right before your eyes."

Anne Rice has created a body of work that marks her as one of the most imaginative, intelligent, and skillful writers currently working. While she has produced in several areas, all her work seems to share a fascination with the implications of the forbidden. Her two historical novels are good examples. The first, *The Feast of All Saints*, dealt with the *gens de couleur*, people of mixed race who lived in and around New Orleans before the Civil War. (New Orleans is plainly a place of power for Rice. Most of her novels are set there, in whole or in part.) The *gens de couleur* occupied an uneasy place in antebellum society, for obvious reasons; apparently, numerous wealthy white men kept "colored" mistresses by whom they had children. Even nowadays interracial relationships and people of mixed race are problematic; but to this *melange* Rice added male homosexuality and a romance between a teenaged boy and a woman old enough to be his mother. In *Cry to Heaven* she went further: the hero is an 18th-century Italian *castrato*, a star in the opera of the day, with lovers of both sexes.

Rice also pursued themes of forbidden sexuality in novels she wrote under pseudonyms but has since acknowledged. As Anne Rampling, she wrote *Exit to Eden*, about an s/m club/resort on a Caribbean island, and *Belinda*, about the love between a middle-aged author of children's books and a 16-year-old girl. As A. N. Roquelaure she wrote a trilogy of s/m literary pornography based on the tale of Sleeping Beauty. As in *Exit to Eden*, the sexuality is polymorphous-perverse, everyone has everyone else; but the fairy-tale ambience frees her to create the most picturesque and symbolically potent excesses. And alongside the baroque imagination there clearly stands guard a first-rate intelligence, aware of the politico-sexual issues involved and taking them into account. This is of no small importance, for reading is in certain ways like sex. You have to be able to trust a person whom you're allowing to lead you into soft and vulnerable parts of yourself: to turn you on sexually, to scare you, to make you complicit in acts of terrible violence, to test your limits. Even when you've provisionally and temporarily surrendered your will to another's, you are still responsible. Anne Rice is one of the few writers I trust to play literary top to my literary bottom, even on topics such as s/m which disturb me personally a great deal.

One thing which, in my limited experience with the genre, sets Anne Rice's vampires apart is that she tells the stories from their viewpoint, sympathetically, forcing the reader to identify with the vampires rather than with their victims. (The only exception I know of is Suzy McKee Charnas's excellent *The Vampire Tapestry*.) These vam-

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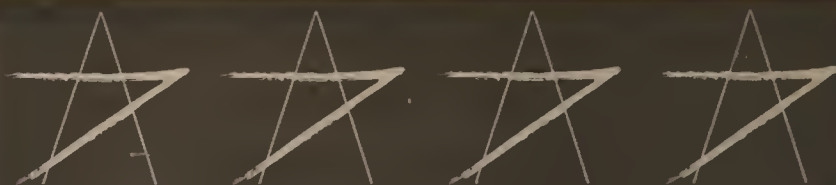
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# Better than the movies

Kathi Maio's feminist film reviews are right on target

Feminist In The Dark

Kathi Maio

The Crossing Press, Freedom, Col., 1988  
\$7.95 paper, 223 pp.

Reviewed by Liz Galst

It's hard for me to figure out what I like most about Kathi Maio's movie reviews in the feminist magazine *Sojourner*. Perhaps it's her winning way with the English language. That insightful plot analysis. Maybe it's her "I don't know about art, I just know what I like" attitude. Whatever it is though, I'm not Maio's only devoted fan. Elaine Goldman Gill of The Crossing Press likes Maio's reviews so much, she asked if she could compile them, and ten hitherto unpublished reviews, into a book. The result is *Feminist in the Dark*. Hoopla! Maio's book is so wonderful, you don't even have to be a movie-lover (or have seen the films she's written about) to enjoy it. In fact, given the kind of movies Maio writes about, you might like the reviews more than the movies themselves.

You see, by her own admission, Maio likes schlock; those "general release pop films, the kind that play at every multi-plex cinematic cow palace from coast to coast."

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for celluloid escapist trash; I just can't bear shelling out six bucks a time to watch some white boys' fantasy grace the silver screen. But Maio takes a different tack. She reviews these films not only because they happen to jibe well with her personal aesthetic, but also because she thinks "it's important for us [feminists] to look at the films the majority of Americans are watching. It is the job of the feminist critic to name the distortions and attacks and, by so doing, reject them."

Initially, Maio didn't consider herself a genuine critic. She started writing her movie reviews because she was trying to help out Susan Shapiro, then the *Sojourner* Film Editor, while Shapiro was pregnant. "At first I was a feminist writer who did film reviews. I think what I've become is a feminist film critic, a woman who continues to develop an ever more critical eye towards films."

And what an eye she has! When all the mainstream reviewers labeled the 1986 British film *Wish You Were Here* (directed by David Leland) a comedy, Maio called the film as she saw it — a dramatic portrait of a gutsy young woman who'd been sexually abused. In "Fade to White," her review of Steven Spielberg's screen adaptation of the novel *The Color Purple*, Maio documents step-by-step the betrayal of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning work.

For example, Spielberg orchestrates the movie's most dramatic moment out of nowhere — certainly not out of Walker's novel. Alice Walker creates her Shug as a wonderful wild woman blues singer who,



Kathi Maio

by necessity, leaves her children by Albert to be raised by her parents while she tours the country. The disapproval of both of her parents towards her free-living lifestyle keeps her estranged from them. And she is content to have it so.

Spielberg's Shug (Margaret Avery) is a lost lamb more than a free spirit. She is a woman obsessed with her lost father and the power of paternity.... The movie's highest drama occurs when Shug is interrupted in her performance at Harpo's juke-joint by the distant strains of gospel music coming from her father's church. In a production number right out of *Cabin in the Sky*, Shug leads the barroom denizens to her father's church singing the Quincy Jones gospel number, "Maybe God's Trying to Tell you Something." As she marches into the church, toward her stern-faced father on the altar, she moans out the line, "I love you, Lord. Speak to me!" And we know she is pleading with daddy and not Jesus.

If you think Maio's keen eye is tuned only to the negative aspects of the North American cinema, well, there isn't exactly a ton of great work being churned out of Tinsel Town. But when something good does come down the pike (either from Hollywood or some struggling independent filmmaker), Maio is the first to sing its praises. She loved Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts*, not only because it was a somewhat faithful adaptation of Jane Rule's *Desert of the Heart* but also because of its sex scene.

Deitch's love scene is remarkable because it is honest and erotic. Something well-intentioned movies like *Lianna* and *By Design* (and less well-intentioned films like *Personal Best*) never achieved. Such movies seemed to accept the right of women to love one another but were coy, or downright embarrassed, about showing actual lovemaking between women. Since

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# Poems with potential and the pitfalls of a first work

*Secret Passages* skirts sexual love between men

Secret Passages: A Trilogy of Thought

Philip Robinson

Vantage Press, Inc., New York, 1987  
\$7.95 cloth, 86 pp.

Reviewed by Terri L. Jewell

Philip Robinson is a gay Black man living and working as a detox project therapist in New York City. His first book, *Secret Passages: A Trilogy of Thought*, suffers from the common pitfalls of a "first work" — lack of craft and restraint, self-righteousness, and a notion that every occurrence in his life is worth reading about. Robinson engages in a fury of self-absorbed ruminations centered around his trilogy — God, personal friends, lovers — that cannot even remotely be construed as poetry. He seems to believe that his "stream-of-consciousness" composed of three-syllable words is his "Answer" to all of life's ills.

For example, in "New Horizons: At Sixteen (To Cynthia Grace Robinson)," he writes:

Into steps of growth we measure the knowledge cemented,  
the understanding made clear, and responsibility into  
action; actualization is a self-proclaimed testament  
to living

The inability of the author to use clear, accessible language is further illustrated when he writes this first line to the title piece, "Secret Passages":

Walls record the history of superficial,  
fruitful and projectional liaisons....

Later, he continues in "Cemented Time (To Sandra Leverage Crump, Ph.D.):"

Empirical evidence points to  
the knowledge manifested to  
the understanding made clear  
and to the responsibility of  
an orchestrated commitment to  
the "just cause attitude"  
another pyramid is built...

The diagram Robinson provided to accompany the above section does not help the reader understand any better what Robinson wishes to say, either.

*Secret Passage: A Trilogy of Thought*, then, is not a "book of poems" as the cover claims, but a collection of loosely-written prose pieces, many of which either eulogize his personal friends or offer simplistic solutions to any number of maladies such as war, substance addiction, loneliness and racism. Robinson dedicates many of the pieces to people or places unknown to the reader, then fails to share anything of the rare quality of his subject except for their educational title or location. He asks the reader to be passive and uninvolved and to accept his accolades without question. One example is "Adhesive Love (To Sandra Truitt Robinson, Ph.D.):"

Sandra's sincere trust of self allows for a  
pure, honest approach  
and this validates her acceptance of God's  
gifts...

The whole piece is written in this voice, offering no reason for the reader to care about Sandra outside the statements of how "nice" she is.

Aside from the failures, Robinson does come quite close to making some vital statements and sensitive observations when he allows himself to approach his love for men. "In Between Birthdays and Other Celebrations..." presents a vulnerable side of Robinson:

I chose to wait in line for your love,  
and the saddest commentary is that others  
did, too....

He is so much better when he abandons his dual self-assignment as preacher-therapist and opens himself to the reader as fallible, as wanting, as human. In "Shared Spirit," he opens beautifully:

Spaced between us are  
some odd years

but then he washes out with:

However, focusing on the  
right approach to now  
is what connects this  
union...

He never explains what this "right" approach is and fails to realize that use of the conjunction "however" so soon closes the door on the reader ever knowing why the

Continued on page B-8

# Spender's autobiographical 1929 novel makes print

The magic of 1920s Germany and the violence around the corner

The Temple

Stephen Spender

Grove Press, NY, 1988  
\$15.95 cloth, 210pp.

Reviewed by Jon David Aloisi-Nalley

What luck that this novel was unearthed in the rare books section of the University of Texas' Humanities Center! In an oh-so-typical occurrence of writers' financial woes, the British poet Spender had sold the novel to the university...and practically forgotten about it. His publishers, the noted Faber and Faber, wouldn't touch it in 1929 — calling the book by this homosexual and leftist "libelous" and "pornographic."

Now that Clause 28 has been enacted by the United Kingdom, the novel may well fall into that category again. The England of

Spender's youth — when the book was written — was the same England that banned *The Well of Loneliness* and *Ulysses*. (Remember the song refrain "whatever is old, is new again"?)

In this practically autobiographical work, Spender writes of a young English writer's sojourn to the Weimar Republic. This writer, Paul, seeks to escape the stultifying cultural climate of England in the "new" Germany of sexy, artistic and sophisticated youth. Spender, with the rest of his famous circle — W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood — did much the same thing.

The Germany Paul discovered was a nation that carried the terrible scars of the post-World War I inflation, an experience that ushered in a national trend toward

Continued on page B-6

# Testimony of courageous women

The Thompson/Kowalski story and tales of women's nonviolent resistance

You Can't Kill the Spirit

Pam McAllister

New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1988  
\$10.95 paper, \$34.95 cloth, 237 pp.

Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?

Koren Thompson and Julie Andrzejewski

Spinsters/Aunt Lute Book Co., S.F., 1988  
\$10.95 paper, \$20.95 cloth, 280 pp.

Reviewed by Carrie Allison

Fighting back begins with speaking out, and two new books hot off the feminist presses do just that. *You Can't Kill the Spirit* by Pam McAllister and *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?* by Karen Thompson and Julie Andrzejewski give voice to the struggles and strengths of women both past and present.

McAllister fans the flames of nonviolent resistance with stories of women's courage in taking nonviolent action around the world. Her stories would benefit from more detailed portraits of the women involved, giving us a chance to see the personal forces that motivated them and to look for those forces in our own lives. Her overly enthusiastic prose also presents some problems. It tends to be a bit heavy-handed, pushing us toward an admiration for these women that their unembellished stories



Karen Thompson

most effectively evoke.

Nonetheless, McAllister's book will have you thumbing through the nearest feminist newspaper to find the meeting time for that activist group you've been meaning to join. And this collection itself is a gold mine of in-

Continued on page B-7



# Callow on Laughton



Charles Laughton in the 1937 *Vessel of Wrath*

## Charles Laughton: a Difficult Actor

Simon Callow  
Grove Press, NY, 1988  
\$18.95 cloth, 318 pp.

Reviewed by Tim Walton

Simon Callow was in the 1970s the first English actor to voluntarily come out of the closet. And he came out with a vengeance, appearing in early Gay Sweatshop productions. Charles Laughton, of course, as he would demurely understate it, "had a strong streak of homosexuality in [his] make-up." In this wonderful actor's biography, Callow has chosen not to illuminate either Laughton's individual roles or his career by reference to his homosexuality.

This restraint may be very advanced. When dealing with a mathematician such as Turing, it was daring, as Hodges did, to integrate his homosexuality into his life and challenging to relate it to his research. It would be hard to treat an actor's homosexuality without slipping into triviality to cliché. Wouldn't after all, the real challenge be to write a biography of someone like Brando or Olivier and show how his *heterosexuality* influenced his acting?

Callow may have been wise to have limited his analysis as he has. Still — homosexuality as it's been constructed and experienced in our culture does have many affinities to the theater, with its masks and roles (not to mention the glitter and costumes). And Laughton's homosexuality in particular (with his sense of his own ugliness and low self-esteem) seems to present a dynamic for compensatory acting. To ignore all this seem somehow — dare I say it — perverse! Perhaps no more so, though, than regretting the book that wasn't written.

As for the book that was written, it is sure to be absorbing to actors. For in it Callow tries to describe the creative dynamics at work in each of Laughton's undertakings: The difficulties he faced, ranging from the seemingly trivial (costumes, make-up) to the terminally insurmountable (blank verse); his attempts to get through, over, or around them; and his resulting triumphs and failures. (Who hasn't wept at his hunchback of Notre Dame or hissed at this Captain Bligh?) Sometimes the recreations of Laughton's inner working are highly speculative, but because Callow is so sympathetically in tune with the actor's creative process, one feels there is always *some* truth to them and maybe Laughton's own as well.

Callow is also interested in a larger subject. That's no surprise to readers of his earlier book *On Being an Actor*, in which he decried the current tyranny of puppeteer directors. (The fascism of the avant-garde is a continuing embarrassment.) In this his second book Callow considers the question "Whether it is possible to talk about acting as [a creative] art at all." He suggests that "If acting is a creative art...then it is perfectly reasonable to demand for it conditions similar to those of the painter or the writer: the right, that is, to make a mess, to splash around, to make drafts and sketches, to have a wastepaper bin at your side." Laughton insisted on this right. When he was engaged in his role, he would never do hack work, never just pull out some tricks that would get him through a performance. He viewed his roles "Not as problems to be solved or hurdles to be cleared but as challenges to self-knowledge: could he unlock the part of himself that would give meaning and life to the character?" Because he insisted on striving for this authenticity,

he was "a difficult actor."

We are generally accustomed to thinking of artists as having some liberty from the marketplace efficiencies that grind the rest of us down. There is perhaps something illusory about this notion even for the "creative" artists, i.e. the ones who are allowed their messes. *Charles Laughton: a Difficult Actor* makes it clear how very illusory indeed this notion is for the performing artists. Callow proposes no remedies, and the remedies here are far less clear than in the case of the puppeteer directors. But presenting us vividly with this problem, as Callow does here in Laughton's struggle and achievement — just keeping it before us — is undoubtedly worth something. □

## No way to run a mystery

Heavy Gilt  
Dolores Klaich  
Naiad Press, Tallahassee, Fla., 1988  
\$8.95 paper, 173 pp.

Reviewed by Mara Math

This is a disappointingly slight, if well-intentioned, mystery from the author of *Woman + Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism*. Although that 1974 work focused on the variety of lesbian life and insisted that we could not be reduced to types, the author has not carried this precept over into her fiction. With one exception, every character in *Heavy Gilt* is thoroughly good or wholly unsympathetic, and Klaich instructs us heavy-handedly throughout as to which is which. Too much telling crushes the flickering life in the already one-dimensional characters and defuses much of the comic potential.

The title should function as a pun on the wealth of the closeted, middle-aged preppies of "Cape Gull" and on their motivations for staying closeted, but it is rendered meaningless because their privilege is taken for granted. When dashing dyke detective Tyler Divine (complete with raccoon-lined trenchcoat) investigates the disappearance of homophobe Malcolm James, whose sister Hilary lives with her lover Dru on "almost matching trust funds," Tyler never even asks who inherits should Malcom prove to be dead. For that matter, she doesn't ask for a picture of the missing man. Is this any way to run a mystery?

I've always wondered if the attractive lesbian writer interviewed anonymously in the first chapter of *Woman + Woman* weren't Klaich herself — the questions and answers dovetailed so exquisitely. In this book, the ever-so-clever Bettina, lesbian feminist author and celebrity, annoyingly shares not only opinions but exact word-for-word phrasings with the omniscient narrative voice.

Katherine Forrest, thanked by Klaich for her "sensitive editing skills," has also missed the clunky anachronisms sprinkled throughout the book: For example, in 1975 an ostensibly straight man would not call another man "hunky," and in what year on this planet would a radical lesbian-feminist repeatedly think of and refer to a woman detective as "the shamus?" And how could either of these otherwise intelligent writers (Forrest is the author of the excellent feminist mystery *Amateur City* and the less credible *Murder at the Nightwood Bar*) overlook following passage?

A new fantasy came to Bettina. Two naked women; the one with silvery blonde hair forcefully grasps, in her teeth, the green eyeshade tangled in the other's long, dark, lush hair, tosses the eyeshade aside — and returns to take the darker woman's freed tresses in her mouth. Yummers.

"Yummers?" This is as serious a crime as anything in the plot. Despite a few glittering comic moments, *Heavy Gilt* is mostly dross. □

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## Suffering with good intentions

**Castro Street Memories**  
N.A. Diaman  
Persana Press, San Francisco, 1988  
\$14.95 paper, 206pp.

Reviewed by John Kyper

I was wary of picking up this book, what with its derivative title along the lines of Neil-Simon-Goes-to-Castro-Beach, and its cover image of a barechested, mustachioed man cradling his head in front of a San Francisco Victorian house. Unfortunately, in this instance, first impressions turned out to be accurate, as confirmed by the book's plodding prose.

*Castro Street Memories* appears as a series of thinly-disguised autobiographical vignettes. It follows narrator George Pappas as he leaves New York for San Francisco in the mid-1970s to settle on Castro Street, witnessing over the next decade the neighborhood's transformation into America's pre-eminent gay ghetto — and the traumas of assassination, riots and AIDS.

Compelling subject matter for a novel to be sure. Stan Leventhal recently demonstrated what can be done when it gets into the hands of a skilled writer-artist, with his "slice of life" tour de force of New York's contemporary urban gay milieu, *Mountain Climbing in Sheridan Square*. But *Castro Street Memories* alas, is not such a work.

Diaman recounts many experiences familiar to me (as I lived in S.F. for several years during the period described): cruising and tricking, the loss of innocence as the "Castro clone" image became de reiguer

and began to crowd out other alternatives, starting an affair to discover that one's partner is suffocating in his possessiveness, a racist bigot, or otherwise obnoxious.

But it was only my familiarity with the topic that kept me reading until the end. Episodes blur into one another, and name-dropping is frequent. Pappas' wooden recollection of "significant events" in San Francisco leave the reader unmoved. Scenes sometimes appear disembodied from any context and lack intelligible rhyme or reason, as when the narrator in a cameo carries a sign at the 1982 Gay Olympics. A scene like this practically cries out for a humorous or witty exposition, but no such luck. Here as elsewhere, Diaman's attempt to be profound falls on its face.

Some of the writing is particularly ponderous and insipid, e.g. an opening sentence to a chapter: "The Democratic National Convention in San Francisco was a headline event during the summer of 1984."

At times the author's reflections seem embarrassingly neurotic, as in his description of marching with Black and White Men Together in the Gay Freedom Day Parade:

I wondered if people along the route who saw me would assume I was exclusively into black men. While this erroneous assumption might open new possibilities with blacks, it might also close some of my options among whites and Asians.

Diaman's heart and head might be in the right place. However, as this disappointing book demonstrates, it is not enough to suffer with good intentions. □

## An odyssey of discovery

**River Road**  
C.F. Bargman  
New American Library, New York, 1988  
\$18.95 cloth, 374 pp.

Reviewed by Donald Stone

*River Road* tells the story of an odyssey that takes Eugene Goessler from his Ohio home to the drug culture of New York, a pastoral life in the wilds of California and finally to the world beyond America. This is also a journey of personal discovery during which Eugene explores his sexual identity and formulates lessons for survival and success. The process requires both a willingness to embrace new adventures and the necessity to become free of those prejudices to which Eugene has been subjected by parents and teachers. His development is advanced by an encounter with a mysterious berdache figure who reveals to Eugene the value of trusting one's self. In turn such trust allows him to accept change and himself: "I have a choice. I can love myself or hate myself, and I choose to love myself."

*River Road* is a carefully wrought story. To highlight key features of the drama, Borgman repeatedly breaks the narrative line until past, present and future no longer follow each other in their natural order. This technique proves particularly successful in revealing Eugene's inner world and in establishing important contrasts. We observe, for example, the haunting effects of a fatal fire Eugene witnessed as a boy long before the event itself is described. Later, we are made to watch Eugene and a friend put together an aluminum Christmas tree. It is

much like one Eugene's mother once hoped her husband would buy for her. When Lola and Eugene set up their tree, however, the shorter branches are placed at the bottom so that the pre-ordained shape is inverted. By fulfilling an ambition of his mother, yet disregarding all the conventions she would have respected, Eugene displays his ability to accept an inescapable past and, at the same time, be himself.

Since Eugene's odyssey of discovery encompasses experiences and lessons that can hardly be claimed by the homosexual world alone, *River Road* continues the recent tendency of gay male writers to broaden the scope of their fiction. The novel also illustrates certain complexities that may arise from this tendency.

Toward the end of the book, Eugene, now a famous poet, lectures to a university audience and encourages it to follow the philosophy that has guided his life: "All I can tell you people, students and teachers, jocks and bookworms, is, dig your physical body." Within the pages of the novel, however, it is primarily the gay or lesbian soul that dares to be free. Exceptions appear, but they are not numerous enough to undercut a repeated equation in the text between straight and conventional. (Indeed, two straight, once "liberated" characters eventually backslide to the tedium of suburbia, whereas the persons in the story who exhibit mystical or healing powers are all gay.) Well written, powerful even in its portrait of Eugene's childhood, *River Road* seems clear about its message, yet almost certain that an entire segment of its readers cannot hear that message. □

## Int'l Women's Crime series

**The Last Draw**  
Elisabet Peterzen  
Translated by Laura Desertrain  
Seal Press, Seattle, 1988  
\$8.95 paper, 228 pp.

Reviewed by Mara Math

*The Last Draw* is one of a quartet of new mystery titles introducing Seal Press's new International Women's Crime Series. In this Swedish mystery, married journalists Erik and Katrin Skafte lead the pack in investigating a series of Stockholm murders. Drugs or politics are ruled out as the connecting factor between the seven victims, who span what seems to be an inexplicably broad range of background, age, class, profession and personality. It is Katrin who realizes what one

characteristic they share: they are all male.

Katrin and Erik recreate each victim's last hours, and these "case histories," as it were, delineate sexism in a variety of guises. Peterzen has been almost too subtle in some of these segments — non-feminist readers may not twig to the more insidious examples of sexism — but she is brilliant in her depiction of the psychologist Gustavsson. This segment could stand as a short story on its own. Compassionate with his first client of the day, an aging alcoholic man who can't face the reality of being laid off, Gustavsson becomes Mr. Hyde with the next client. The 40-year-old secretary is severely depressed; she has spent 20 years in a dead-end job and has only another 20 years of drudgery to look forward to. Gustavsson coldly bullies and blames her, alternately telling her that

she has created her own reality and that she must accept the fact that certain things are beyond her control. He finds her questioning of the status quo uppity and disturbing, and revenges himself by denying her even a tranquilizer prescription. His last client of the day is a bratty 12-year-old boy, an outcast who plays the rebel in self-defense; and this client Gustavsson takes seriously enough to question his own adult conformity.

It is the bane of mystery reviewers to be unable to quote from the climax and resolution of the work we are critiquing. Sigh. I'll say only that the conclusion of *The Last Draw* offers provocative points about society's double standard regarding the links between gender and violence, as well as some wonderfully barbed feminist comebacks.

Unfortunately, *The Last Draw* suffers from many of the weaknesses common to didactic fiction, not least of which is the supremacy of theory over character. Peterzen has developed the creepy victims much more fully than her protagonists; Katrin and Eric are ciphers until the last few pages, as is the murderer. The absence of any likeable characters and the lack of a strong plotline may lead many readers to give up before the rewarding end. □

## Smearing patronymy's name

**Naming Ourselves, Naming Our Children: Resolving the Last Name Dilemma**

Sharan Lebell  
The Crossing Press, Freedom, Calif., 1988  
\$6.95 paper, 102 pp.

Reviewed by Anne Strasbourg

In this small book, Sharon Lebell does a good job of smearing patronymy's name — that is, the system by which children adopt their fathers' names, and women take their husbands'. Most of us will need little persuasion that this system is in sore need of replacement, and Lebell is a cogent arguer. The drawbacks of compulsory patronymy include, she points out, the disappearance of our female forebears from the family tree; the statistical discrepancy between the gender of the name-giver and that of the person who generally raises the family; the provisional nature of women's names and, therefore, their identities; and the difficulty of tracing a woman who has changed her name at marriage.

Lebell has investigated the history of European patronymy and uncovered some interesting facts. For example, surnames were not used in Europe until the eleventh century, and were not common until nearly the seventeenth; names rarely remain intact for as long as ten generations; and a name can be legally changed solely through usage. One wishes, though, that she had looked into naming practices in other parts of the world. What do people do where the family unit is structured differently? How is clan membership acknowledged?

That the book has been written for a very mainstream audience is made clear when Lebell proposes an answer — what she calls the Bilineal Solution. In this system, girls take the father's surname for their middle name, and the mother's surname for their own. This is simply reversed for the boy children. Her criteria for a solution were these: that the new system embody present-day values, that it reflect women's true influence, that it be conservative enough for people to adopt it, that it be simple, and that it work when passed on from generation to generation. Elsewhere she mentions that it should promote family unity and remove the stigma of illegitimacy.

Nowhere in these pages are the needs of same-sex families addressed, nor those of other non-traditional families. Anyone wishing for a radical solution, as opposed to Lebell's specifically conservative proposal, will have to do some further investigation. □

### Correction

It has been brought to our attention that Terri Jewell's review of Sapphire's *Meditations on the Rainbow* in our December book supplement had appeared in similar form in the *Lambda Book Report*. We regret any misunderstandings this may have caused.



## Spender

Continued from page B-3



Stephen Spender

self-portrait by the author, Hamburg, 1930

fatalism as well as a desire to escape threatening modernism by retreating into old ways. Both of these tendencies ignored responsibility for the present, with the only exception being the Left in its various factions.

In walks along the Rhine and forays to Hamburg's notoriously gay Sankt Pauli district, Paul sees the beauty and freedom of the summer of 1929 and the violence and fear just behind it. His experience of the magic is represented in many ways by his attendance at a 1929 dinner party in the studio of "decadent aesthete" Joachim Lenz. Furnished with *objets* obtained from Bauhaus, the studio captures the Germany of DaDa, Paul Klee, Hoholy Nagy and Gropius — all castigated by the Nazis as examples of bourgeois Jewish decadence. On Paul's last night in Hamburg in 1931 he returns to Lenz's studio for a farewell dinner. He is greeted by an injured host and a trashed studio; the Bauhaus furniture and Lenz's books have been looted by an ex-boyfriend of Lenz turned stormtrooper and his colleague and Lenz has been slashed by a knife in the process. The apolitical, cynical Lenz has no place in the new Germany. At this point, the turmoil of Germany makes

England appear a place to escape to, not from.

Pauls' young, fellow English wordsmiths in *The Temple*, Simon Wilmot and William Bradshaw, are analogues, respectively, of Auden and Isherwood. Simon, who meets Paul at the beginning of the novel at Oxford, influences the impressionable young writer and Paul also proves a tremendous influence on Bradshaw.

Also of particular interest is the character Ernst Stockmann, who meets Paul at university in Germany and offers him a place to stay at the house of his parents. The Stockmanns represent the milieu known as pre-Hitler German Jewry, eschewing *Ostjuden* (Jews from Poland and Russia whom they blame for the climate of anti-Semitism), deluding themselves into thinking that rational considerations will counteract the influence of the Nazis, all the while surrounding themselves with art and culture to close out the ugliness. Ernst introduces Paul to the world of the "Lokal" — where they go with friends to meet other men. But Ernst truly doesn't fit anywhere — not in Germany, France, England or Palestine. He is a tragic figure who seeks a place to belong while his world crumbles around him.

*The Temple* captures well the social and political cynicism and apathy of the German body politic during this period. In addition, it offers from a young writer of the late '20s a frank and unapologetic look at homosexuality — and abortion; both were issues that would be off-limits to mainstream literature for the next 40 years. □

## Potrebenko

Continued from page B-1

Odessa often brings an enjoyable quirkiness to political analysis, but some of her takes on feminism are bizarre.

It rankles Odessa, for instance, that "...feminism had few books and little music.... A new music of feminism did not develop or developed so slowly that Odessa did not notice." Is it Odessa or her creator who were not paying attention to the explosion of women's music that began in the mid-'70s? It's an ambiguity that should be clarified, because such a huge inaccuracy necessarily either alienates readers who know better or leaves those who don't in the

dark about the existence of a rich feminist culture.

Volunteering at the women's bookstore, Odessa runs afoul of the collective by denouncing all of the books. The worst, she says, are Erica Jong and Kate Millett, followed closely by Germaine Greer and Margaret Atwood. What are we to make of Odessa lumping Millett (*Sexual Politics*, *Flying*, *Sita*) and Atwood together with patriarchal apologists Jong and Greer? Atwood has produced some fine feminist work, including *Power Politics*, a volume of poetry about war between the sexes and *The Edible Woman*, a novel about a woman who realizes she is being devoured by the men in her life. And curiously, it's not the masochism in Millett that Odessa objects to, but the sex. ("Millett is doing the stud thing only not very successfully.") *Sometimes They Sang* is set in 1979/80, before today's extensive sex and sexuality debates, but even one more paragraph here explaining Odessa's objections could make the difference between the possibly astute and the apparently asinine (e.g., does she think Millett objectifies women?).

With these objections registered, it is easy to sing the praises of *Sometimes They Sang*. Odessa's idealism, loneliness and valiant attempts to muddle through are very real and endearing, and at 102 pages this is one of the rare books that seems too short. We last see Odessa at a winter holiday party for the union picketers she has been working with:

Looking around the room, Odessa realized that it was filled with people who still had beliefs....

She saw that the women's movement was a confused mass of too few people, some good, most indifferent, muddled about its goals and facing an enemy that appeared invincible.

But for all the pain and despair, she grew and prospered and gained in strength....

Well, Odessa thought in great surprise, I'm good for a few more years yet. Aren't I amazing? Are we all so resilient? We must all be like this.

And she went forth into the world to discover what further adventures awaited.

I'd love to see what she makes of the '80s — send postcards from your next decade, Odessa. □

## Wilde

Continued from page B-1

tion. "It is about the city that made Oscar Wilde." If, like me, you're a bit vague on the actual conditions of late Victorian Britain, a social history sounds like just the thing to help understand how Wilde perceived himself and was perceived in his day. Biographers fill in quite a bit of this background, but there are many details — such as the fact that when Wilde arrived in London in 1879, electric street lights were just beginning to be installed there — which don't belong to biography proper but help to understand its subject.

The best thing about *Oscar Wilde's London* is its illustrations, particularly the many photographs, most of which are so clear and sharp they might have been taken yesterday. Not just the famous, they include some fascinating pictures of daily life by one Paul Martin (see pp. 19-20, 94), whose work I'd like to know better. The text is less impressive. The chapters on London's growth, on the poor, and on sports and popular entertainment are pretty good. But the book seems rather poorly organized. It offers no information on how the three authors divided up the writing among themselves, and at times I had the feeling that it had been pasted together too quickly. Topics are sometimes dropped almost in the middle, with the outcome of one or another controversy omitted as though everyone knew it. There are also some odd errors which suggest a lack of care in fact-checking. The message on the infamous visiting card left for Wilde by the Marquess of Queensberry, which led to Wilde's downfall, is quoted here as "To Oscar Wilde. posing as a sodomite (sic)" (73) Queensberry did indeed misspell the key word, but I've always seen it rendered as "Somdomite," and had thought the error was almost as well-known as some of Wilde's epigrams. (According to Richard Ellmann's new biography, the actual message was "To Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite.") I felt that the connection with Oscar Wilde was too tenuous, more of a marketing hook than a unifying principle for the book. Still, *Oscar Wilde's London* is worth a look, and it includes a long reading list which should be useful to anyone who wants to explore the subject more thoroughly. See if your library has it.

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## Thompson/Kowalski

Continued from page B-3

formation on feminist activism with its exhaustive listings of resources and recommended readings.

Perhaps the book's most notable feature is its inclusion of such a wide range of women resisting in so many different ways. Graffiti artists, singers, strikers, and tax resisters all step out from its pages, some of them well-known, but some of them famous only briefly among the family members, neighbors and friends who witnessed their courage. Young and old, lesbian and straight, of all colors, they provide ample proof that creativity and determination can overpower might.

"I abide where there is a fight against wrong," declares labor organizer Mary "Mother" Jones in these pages, and we follow her when she joins the over 20,000 women and girls who left the miserably crowded garment shops in New York City's Lower East Side to take to the picket lines in 1909. They demanded and got higher wages in what is now a footnote to history known as "the first great strike of women."

McAllister also takes us back to 1977 when a group of grieving mothers in Argentina began a protest that helped topple a brutal regime. They demanded to know why their children had been tortured and killed by the thousands, and persisted even when they themselves began to swell the ranks of "the disappeared."

We hear the story of Juanita Nelson, a Black woman who was jailed early one morning in 1959 for refusing to pay taxes that financed the U.S. military. Unwilling to cooperate in any way, Nelson went to jail and testified to the court in the only piece of clothing that she had been wearing when arrested, her bathrobe. She was eventually released and never paid a cent.

Karen Thompson and her lover, Sharon Kowalski, take their places beside such courageous women as they fight to have their relationship honored by the Minnesota court system. The book *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?* asks a question uppermost in the minds of many lesbians, gay men and disabled persons of all persuasions. And it serves to focus more light on a case that just recently took a turn in Thompson's favor.

As recently reported in *GCN*, the results of a competency test indicate that Kowalski, brain damaged in a 1983 collision, is capable of communicating her wishes. The judge in her competency case has ordered that Kowalski be temporarily moved from the Hibbing, Minn. nursing home where she has been kept since 1985 to a facility better equipped to meet her needs. This move is currently being fought by Donald Kowalski, Sharon's father and court-appointed guardian. He has been fighting court-ordered competency testing for his daughter and visits to her by Karen for years. (See *GCN*, Jan. 1-7, 8-14.)

Thompson and Kowalski's fight for their rights began when, several months after Kowalski's accident, her parents discovered the true nature of her relationship with Thompson. *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?* takes us through the ensuing court battles — and with considerable grace considering the tendency of legalese to obscure everything in its path. Thompson and Andrzejewski recount Donald Kowalski's successful attempts to move his daughter to a number of different nursing homes, each one less adequately equipped to meet her needs than the last. With each move it became harder and harder for Thompson, who had remained by Kowalski's side since the start, to see her lover and to continue to play an integral part in her therapy.

Despite the rampant homophobia portrayed within its pages the book never degenerates into the revengeful harangue it could have become. Rather, the story told offers a moving testimony to the power of truth bravely spoken. Thompson "came out" as a lesbian to herself and to the public after painful soul-searching had convinced her that only in this way could she free Kowalski from the control of parents determined to deny their daughter's lesbianism. And as a result, Thompson realized that thousands of lesbians and gay men were willing to stand with her.

At the same time that they reveal the power engendered by speaking out, the authors emphasize the danger inherent in remaining closeted. Throughout their four-year relationship Thompson and Kowalski hid the truth from almost everyone who knew them, leaving Thompson with few allies able to testify to the primacy of her

relationship with her lover as she battled Donald Kowalski for guardianship of Sharon. In July 1985 he was appointed guardian by the court and Thompson and Kowalski have been legally prohibited from seeing each other since. The authors include within their book the forms for and information on a Durable Power of Attorney, necessary for gay and lesbian couples and friends to legally make medical decisions for each other should the need arise.

Of her struggle, Thompson writes, "We must fight for everyone's basic rights. We must make ourselves known. Our voices must be heard in large enough numbers that what we say cannot be discounted, cannot be ignored." *You Can't Kill the Spirit* and *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?* challenge each of us to tell the stories of our own lives before it is too late. □

## Pointless digressions and Wittgenstein

The World as I Found It

Bruce Duffy

Ticknor & Fields, New York, 1987

\$19.95 cloth, 546pp.

Reviewed by Duncan Mitchel

Well, I'm afraid that *The World as I Found It* is a bit of a disappointment. Till recently there was no full biography of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), the most influential philosopher of this century, so the prospect of even a novel about him excited me a little. Aside from his professional importance, Wittgenstein was one of the more interesting eccentrics of our time. Born to a wealthy Catholic (converted from Judaism) family in Vienna, haunted by the suicide of an older gay brother, Wittgenstein was a wanderer all his life. He won the interest of the great mathematician Frege, studied with Bertrand Russell at Cambridge, then dropped philosophy to join the Austrian army in World War I. During the war he wrote his brilliant and mystifying *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, then abandoned philosophy as soon as it was published to teach schoolchildren in an Austrian village. But friction with the villagers forced him to abandon that project, so he returned home long enough to design and build a house for his sister, then went back to Cambridge to teach philosophy for the rest of his life. The only other work he intended for publication, the *Philosophical Investigations*, appeared posthumously, but recent years have seen a flood of publications culled from his notebooks and from his students' lecture notes.

It's certain that he was gay, though his love life was intensely problematical; so far I gather that he had heavy Platonic crushes on his students, but whether any of them ever reciprocated I don't know. He also had many endearing quirks, such as a fondness for Mickey Mouse cartoons and detective stories; and his former student Norman Malcolm recalls how Wittgenstein insisted while visiting on helping Malcolm's wife with the dishes. So Wittgenstein certainly seems a suitable subject for a novel, and everything from its cover blurb to the Library of Congress Cataloguing Data announces that *The World as I Found It* is about Wittgenstein.

And quite a bit of it is, but there is a frustrating amount of space — seemingly about half the book — devoted to Wittgenstein's Cambridge colleagues Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore. Even worse, while *The World as I Found It* sheds little light on Wittgenstein's sexuality, it tells far more than I wanted to know about Russell's, including many tediously lengthy accounts of heterosexual copulation. Don't get me wrong; some of my best friends are heterosexual, but in a novel about Wittgenstein these interludes seem rather pointless digressions. Duffy writes well, a neat journeyman's prose, and *The World as I Found It* is very much worth reading, but I'd be happier if the author had dared to go deeper into the mind and heart of his alleged star, and spent less time on the supporting cast. □



# Movies

Continued from page B-3

these films were directed by men, this is not surprising. You can imagine how broad-minded these fellows felt for making their lesbian leads nice, attractive people, all the while retaining their touching faith that you can't have real sex without a pecker.

Deitch gives us real sex, deeply passionate and affirming. And if it is somewhat unrealistic (our two lovers achieve simultaneous orgasm in their first encounter), it is certainly no more unrealistic than ninety percent of the heterosexual seductions Hollywood has given us over the years.

I'm telling you, just the prose is enough to make me swoon, and for that reason alone, Maio's book is worth your time and money. Which is a lot more than I can say for most movies these days. □

# Secret Passages

Continued from page B-3

years are between them.

The piece "When I Stopped Kissing My Father" is ripe with potential for something outstanding, but Robinson contents himself again with observations of the obvious rather than with an examination closer to his soul. On the same note, "Black Men Deserve..." would have benefitted from a deeper level of commitment from the writer. The opportunity for self-affirmation is tremendous, but he stops short and resorts to platitudes.

Unfortunately, *Secret Passages* skirts the reality of sexual love between men, though God's love, hugs and "touches" are abundantly mentioned. It seems that Robinson is uncomfortable with his own sexuality despite his proclamations to strive toward self-knowledge and self-love. His ambivalence is evident throughout the book when he approaches the topics of "love" and "sex." He offers love as the cure-all, then writes in "Tapestry of Justice?":

PRIDE makes you believe no one can love you like yourself; masturbation is more than just a release; it strengthens the solo stance...

It is dubious that this statement can be interpreted as a stance on self-acceptance. "Love" involves expressions of physical sexuality. Robinson fails to distinguish between the physicality necessary for establishing bonds and that which, when performed in excess, can be disruptive. He seems to lump all sexual encounters as being base in comparison to his "hugs" and "touches." This may be the author's way to accentuate intimacy between men, but it seems more of an expression of his sense of morality.

All in all, the jacket notes to *Secret Passages: Trilogy of Thought* were accurate in describing the book as borne from "the unknown sea of one man's mind." The seas remain uncharted and the fog has settled in. Had Philip Robinson purged his original manuscript of hackneyed philosophy and concentrated upon what he hinted at having a deeper and keener sense of — LOVE BETWEEN MEN — the reader would have quite a prize. □

# Damned

Continued from page B-2

pires are of course alienated, in a way in which some people imagine was invented by 20th century philosophers, though in fact it's as old as humanity: they are unnatural creatures in the natural world, puzzled with their origin and purpose. Lestat, who figures importantly in all three books, is my favorite. A man of talent and intelligence raised in the boondocks of 18th-century France, longing to study in Paris; a man who loves other men; a man who after his transformation by the Dark Gift is different from most other people in ways so subtle that he can move among the majority almost invisibly, subsisting parasitically on them, savoring his sameness and his difference as he prowls the night — clearly Lestat is among other things a metaphor for modern urban gay men. But he is not content merely to exist. Lestat will not be satisfied till he has pursued the history and origins of his kind into a haze of legend. After a half-century's sleep buried in the soil of New Orleans, Lestat rose in *The Vampire Lestat* to discover the 1980s (in a tour de force which you ought to read if you read nothing else by Rice), and went public by becoming a rock star. I envy his power, his knowledge, his

immortality, and I would gladly accept the Dark Gift myself (just in case Lestat happens to be reading this).

*The Vampire Lestat* ended on a cliff-hanger. Determined to punish Lestat for endangering them by his revelations, hundreds of other vampires had converged on his first concert, only to be mysteriously snuffed out. (Literally, in bursts of flame.) Lestat, his mother Gabrielle, and his friend Louis (the subject of *Interview*) had escaped into the night not knowing why or for how long they had been spared. *The Queen of the Damned* picks up the story from there. We learn what had been suggested at the end of *Lestat*, that Akasha, the ancient Egyptian queen who had been the first vampire, had awakened from her long sleep to rescue Lestat from his would-be assailants; also, as the jacket blurb asserts, that Akasha has plans that threaten the future of at least half of the human race. Along the way we meet several other vampires, some ancient and some young, like a teenaged punk/biker from Detroit called Baby Jenks. There are scenes of real horror, such as a human sacrifice rite in the Himalayas led by a vampire playing the role of Kali, and a fantasy of women slaughtering all the men in a Third-World city, commanded by Akasha playing The Great Mother. There is the Story of the Twins, two mysterious red-haired women who hold the secret of the origin of the vampires, a story which builds on and demolishes much current neo-matriarchalist mythology.

There's not much to tell about the plot; the wicked end well, and the even-more-wicked end badly. What carries the book is Rice's amazing imagination, her ability to bring to life worlds long-dead or never-born, and the meaning she finds in her story. Paradoxically again, this story of the supernatural decrees the irrelevance of the supernatural; it's a tale of monstrous immorality which climaxes in a debate to the death about true morality; out of the fulfillment of superstition and the birth of religion, Rice spins the death of all gods and an end to superstition; and though she writes mostly of the distant past, she refuses adamantly to romanticize it:

"Behold, earthshaking inventions which are useless or obsolete within the same century — the steamboat, the railroads; yet do you know what these meant after six thousand years of galley slaves and men on horseback? And now the dance hall girl buys a chemical to kill the seed of her lovers, and lives to be seventy-five in a room full of gadgets which cool the air and veritably eat the dust. And yet for all the costume movies and the paperback history thrown at you in every drugstore, the public has no accurate memory of anything; every social problem is observed in relation to 'norms' which in fact never existed, people fancy themselves deprived of luxuries and peace and quiet which in fact were never common to any people anywhere at all."

"But the Venice of your time, tell me..."

"What? That it was dirty? That it was beautiful? That people went about in rags with rotting teeth and stinking breath and laughed at public executions? You want to know the key difference? There is a horrifying loneliness at work in this time. No, listen to me. We lived six and seven to a room in those days, when I was still among the living. The city streets were seas of humanity; and now in these high buildings dim-witted souls hover in luxurious privacy, gazing through the television window at a faraway world of kissing and touching..."

*The Queen of the Damned* is, I confess, about twice as long as it needs to be, and might better have been incorporated into *The Vampire Lestat*, whose story it essentially completes. (Personally, though, I couldn't put it down and would have been happy if it had been even longer.) The Story of the Twins is partially repeated several times, like the story of Snowden in *Catch-22*, which some readers may find tedious rather than ominous. The long discussions about morality and meaning, which I found exciting, may strike others as merely windy. This is a risk taken by any ambitious author. Rice promises more Vampire Chronicles, and already in *Lestat* has given us a major novel which transcends its genre to become literature. *The Queen of the Damned* is not quite up to that, but it's still remarkable, and supports my belief that Anne Rice may prove to be one of the most important novelists of the 20th century. □

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# Music

Continued from page 6

*Daughters, Wives* in 1984. The instrumental sound is simple, dominated by the richness of two acoustic guitars, and the songs are storytelling ballads in the progressive folk tradition. "When The Party's Over," about the bicentennial of the settling of Australia by the British, focuses on the Aboriginal people who were there first, with a punch line we could have used in 1976: "Forty thousand years is not a bicentenary." "You Don't Speak For Me" is a welcome song now, as we have to listen to George Bush claim an electoral mandate:

You who poison the airwaves with your  
Genghis Khan views  
You broadcast your bias and then call it  
news  
And you say that you speak for the  
millions out there  
Well, you don't speak for me.

"Silo" chills the blood as it imagines the avoidance practiced by men who staff the missile silos, and "Golden Arches" makes a joke out of the not-quite-funny news that a McDonald's opens somewhere in the world every 17 hours. On a more personal note, "Song For Jacqueline" is a tribute to cellist Jacqueline du Pre, who died of multiple sclerosis at 42 after having to give up her performing career. And if you haven't heard it anywhere else, Fred Small's "Annie" is sure to please:

But she's heard other teachers in the  
hall, saying,  
"What are we going to do about Annie?  
Pretty girl like her shouldn't be alone  
If she took our advice, dressed up real  
nice  
She could find a man to take her home."

[she] dreams of the day when she'll look  
in their faces  
And tell everyone she knows — she'll say  
"Don't you worry about Annie..."

Judy Small's voice is as rich and strong as ever, and she continues to have worthwhile things to say. This is an album with a pleasant sound as well as many serious messages, folk music as it's meant to be.

Judy Fjell has been in the women's music business for years. Her new album, *Dance in the Moment* (Honey Pie Records), will be welcomed by anyone who prefers the women's music of eight or ten years ago. Backed by a talented band including guitarist Nina Gerber (who was one of the stars of Olivia's Carnegie Hall concert last month) and violinist E. Marcy Dieterow-Vaj, she takes a humorous and insightful look at many aspects of women's lives. Particularly successful on the serious side are "Scars on the Land," about the effects of strip mining; and "What Do You See," which may not be for everyone but will certainly speak profoundly to some, as Fjell discovers a loving spirit in a surprising place:

Like you I was surprised to hear love's  
message so strong  
In such an unlikely way from this likeable  
man  
Who came to listen to women's songs  
And sometimes it seems the simple truth  
lulls me to sleep  
But then a riddle wakes me up and I take a  
lifetime leap

Years ago in Seattle I don't remember just  
where or when  
I stopped talking to people's bodies  
And started talking to the spirits within...

The album has several comedic hits that draw plenty of laughs. "Middle-Aged Body (With Teenage Emotions)" is a hilarious tune with a '50s flavor about getting older but not managing to grow up. "I Love You, But I Don't Love Your Dog" (cats, horse, kid) plays out its theme accompanied by appropriate sound effects on the violin. And "Thank Your Lucky Stars" is a foot-stomper that might prove a nice message for some folks in our past:

Yeah you can thank your lucky stars I  
never married you  
You woulda been sad downhearted  
miserable and blue  
I woulda been mad when you came home  
at night, glad when you went away  
And you can thank your lucky stars you're  
not married to me today.

There are times when Fjell sounds like Holly Near in full belt. She has a pleasant voice and, on her humorous numbers, a stagey delivery that makes the most of every line. This album is as refreshing as peanut sauce after a diet of mashed potatoes.

Last November in New York, Dianne Davidson elevated the already lofty roofs of Carnegie Hall and the Waldorf-Astoria grand ballroom with her contributions to Olivia Records' fifteenth birthday party. Her album *Breaking All The Rules* (Second



Dianne Davidson

Wave) is an even better representation of her talents than those live performances. Davidson sang backup vocals on Nancy Vogl's delightful 1987 Nashville album *Fight Like the Dancer*, but on this recording Nashville takes a back seat to downright rock and roll. She sounds like Teresa Trull and Linda Tillery rolled into one, and if you like their singing you'll enjoy her big powerful voice. Her backup band is tight and flexible, including (once again) Nina Gerber, and wraps itself nicely around the music, much of which is written by Davidson.

For lyric content, there are two clear winners here. "Song for my Father" is a moving tribute. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many lesbians had special relationships with their fathers, and this song vividly conveys the content of Davidson's relationship with hers. "Built for Comfort" by Willie Dixon is a rollicking blues tune that gets right to the point:

Some folks are built like this some folks  
are built like that  
But the way I'm built don't call me fat  
Cause I'm built for comfort I ain't built  
for speed  
But I got everything that a good woman  
needs.

"Killer Without A Heart" takes a very oblique focus on AIDS (never mentioning its name), and the arrangement of the backup vocals gives the song an artificial, "plastic" sound that sits oddly among the otherwise very direct and clean arrangements. More satisfying to listen to are Karla Bonoff's "Trouble Again," and Davidson's gospel-sounding "Heaven Bound."

Davidson has a marvelous voice and is an energetic performer. If you've wanted more rock music out of the women's music industry, and Tret Fure's work wasn't quite what you were looking for, then maybe *Breaking All The Rules* is for you. The beat is solid, and the sound is textured by electric guitars instead of washed smooth by synthesizers. Davidson may be "built for comfort," but her music is built for dancing.

Rock and roll with more explicit politics can be found on the new tape by Lifeline, *Still On Fire: Contemporary Labor Songs* (Opportunity Records). Lifeline is a four-woman band based in the D.C. area that turns up wherever progressive politics needs music to express its energy. In recent years they have performed at a wide variety of events, including many labor union conferences, conventions, and workshops, as well as strikes and rallies, including the 1987 March on Washington.

Fans of Lifeline's first tape who haven't heard them recently will find that their sound is no longer dominated by the acoustic folk flavor in which singer-guitarists Mary Trevor and Jeanne Mackey have their roots. They have switched to electric guitars and add a permanent drummer, Rochell Loconto. Loconto and bass player Kris Koth form a very tight and effective rhythm section — so tight that much of the new tape was recorded "live." Instead of each musician playing alone in the studio while listening to tapes or metronome tracks, many of the rhythm tracks were recorded together in pairs or groups. Thus, the somewhat mechanical tone we have become accustomed to in 1980s studio recordings does not mar this album, which is spontaneous and energetic.

This is proudly political music. Even tunes that are familiar from other contexts, like Smokey Robinson's "Get Ready" or Neil Sedaka's "Breaking Up is Hard to Do," are provided with new words about the rise of feminism, the takeover of the workplace by computers ("My computer's down, doo-bee-doo, down, down"), or the need for workers to organize.

Those cuts charm momentarily, but the

lasting impression is made by the material that was written to carry the political message. "Caring Hands," written by Trevor and Mackey for a United Steelworkers video, praises the people who clean, build, and serve, saying, "We do more than our share — put the power in the hands of the people who care." The song shows to advantage the aggressive and tightly interwoven performance of bass and drums. Fred Small's "59 Cents" (here called "69 Cents" to reflect this year's figures on women's pay) is delivered with a sarcastic, angry tone that is most satisfying. The hilarious "What if the Russians Don't Come?" talks common sense about the "evil empire."

"Asian Song," about the contributions of immigrants to American society, must be a challenging item for some labor audiences, whose ears have been filled with our government's efforts to blame unemployment on "foreigners" here and abroad. It is a powerful indictment of bigotry against those who do honest work to earn their pay.

He says, "Excuse my English," but his words speak for us all — he says,  
"These hands, they wash the clothes, these hands have served the food, heaven knows,  
My neck has felt the mob's rope and it's been behind barbed wire,  
My arms have laid down railroad tracks, my back has been for hire,  
My hands have fought injustice and my soul is still on fire  
We're still here, going strong,  
And we're getting tired of proving we belong."

*Still On Fire* is the product of Lifeline's maturity, in sound quality and professional polish. Mackey and Trevor have grown tremendously as singers, and the tape deserves a once-through for the intricacies of drums and bass. This is a good one to put on at a party — someone might learn something.

After sampling everything the year had to offer, listening to Betsy Rose's *Wings Against the Sky* (Kaleidoscope) is like getting together with an old friend. Her style has remained acoustic and intimate, centered around her guitar and piano playing, and she is joined by musicians who blend gently into that intimacy of sound, including backup vocalists Rhiannon and Judy Fjell, and guitarist Nina Gerber. Her lyrics are poetic in their choice of words and turn of phrase. On "Valentine's Day," after searching to no avail for the perfect Valentine, she decides, "So here's a mixed bouquet of perfume and sweat/Plucked from that garden row between romance and regret/'Cause it ain't smooth sailing on the sea of love..." "Open the Door Again" honors the Sanctuary movement and brings to life both the refugees and those who shelter them:

Your crime was teaching women how to  
read and how to write  
And your husband disappeared one sum-  
mer night

Now you see your daily struggle in every  
line you read  
How the poor shall be uplifted, the op-  
pressed shall lead  
It was once we thought we'd teach you,  
give salvation like a prize  
Now our hearts are humbled daily by the  
wisdom in your eyes

"House Full of Secrets" will surely sound familiar to nearly everyone, no matter how "normal" their childhood:

They smile when they're angry they joke  
when they're sad  
There are sudden explosions of good times



Sweet Honey in the Rock

gone bad  
And you're caught in the crossfire like a  
kite in a storm  
And you learn to change with their  
weather but you never feel warm

And children learn early to show a good  
face and bear secrets alone  
And it clings to your habits like cobwebs  
and dust  
Till you find that you're still keeping  
secrets from the ones that you love

And you wish you were softer, that the  
door would swing wide  
But your anger's too narrow, and the path  
of forgiveness too wide

The poignant "Let Her Go" is dedicated to her younger sister, and conveys the sorrow and helplessness that leads to acceptance of death. On happier notes, "Darling I'm Glad" will raise a few chuckles with its weav-



Betsy Rose

ing together of coming out stories. Rose's voice is warm and intimate, and seems to be getting better with the years. Altogether, this album feels like an hour spent with someone who knows you well.

In the past I have not reviewed the recordings of Sweet Honey in the Rock. Because I was the music editor for Bernice Johnson Reagon's songbook, *Compositions: One* (Songtalk Publishers, 1986), I have felt not quite unbiased. But an overview of the best recordings of 1988 cannot omit Sweet Honey's *Live at Carnegie Hall* (Flying Fish), their first live album in nearly eight years. Special blessings go to Flying Fish for making Sweet Honey's work available on compact disc — if you're lucky enough to have a CD player, jump at the chance to hear Sweet Honey as they've never been recorded before. Highlights of this particular release include Aisha Kahlil's potent blues singing on "Your Worries Ain't Like Mine"; the extremely enlightening story of the building of a blouse in Reagon's "Are My Hands Clean?"; the West African "Denko" with bewitching harmonies; and at last a recording of Ysaye Barnwell's haunting setting of the words of Alicia Partnoy, "Song of the Exiled." Don't miss it.

These recordings are available at your local gay/women's bookstores, or from the *Ladyslipper catalogue* — P.O. Box 3130, Durham, NC 27705.

Portions of this article were previously printed in the *Washington Blade*.



## U.S. Adult/Adolescent AIDS Cases as of December 26, 1988

Transmission Categories	White Number (%)	Black Number (%)	Hispanic Number (%)	Asian/ Pacific Islander Number (%)	American Indian/ Alaskan Native Number (%)	Male Number (%)	Female Number (%)	Total
Homosexual/ Bisexual Male	36,586 (78)	7,880 (37)	5,136 (43)	358 (75)	46 (53)	50,113 (68)		50,113 (62)
Intravenous (IV) Drug Abuser	3,185 (7)	8,086 (38)	4,729 (39)	16 (3)	14 (16)	12,468 (17)	3,602 (52)	16,070 (20)
Homosexual Male and IV Drug Abuser	3,505 (7)	1,470 (7)	840 (7)	8 (2)	13 (15)	5,844 (8)		5,844 (7)
Hemophilia/ Coagulation Disorder	648 (1)	51 (0)	59 (0)	10 (2)	3 (3)	750 (1)	24 (0)	774 (1)
Heterosexual cases	689 (1)	2,323 (11)	534 (4)	15 (3)	3 (3)	1,509 (2)	2,061 (30)	3,570 (4)
Transfusion, Blood/Components	1,497 (3)	323 (2)	165 (1)	41 (9)	3 (3)	1,291 (2)	743 (11)	2,034 (3)
Undetermined	1,003 (2)	1,016 (5)	588 (5)	32 (7)	5 (6)	2,141 (3)	519 (7)	2,660 (3)
<b>Subtotal</b>								
<b>[% of all cases]</b>	47,113 [58]	21,149 [26]	12,051 [15]	480 [1]	87 [0]	74,116 [91]	6,949 [9]	81,065 [100]

Total number of AIDS-related deaths, including children: 46,134

The most timely and comprehensive statistical data about AIDS come from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which issue weekly reports. But this information, though seemingly "objective" numerical data, is both limited and biased.

The CDC, based in Atlanta, compile national statistics on AIDS (comparable data is not published for AIDS Related Complex — ARC) based on reports from state health departments and physicians. Standard diagnostic forms are completed by physicians when they diagnose a case and these are sent to state departments of health or the CDC.

The CDC numbers do not account for all people who have AIDS in the U.S. Not all physicians are adequately trained to make an AIDS diagnosis, so many people who have AIDS continue to be misdiagnosed. In addition, some doctors who are motivated to protect their patients from the stigma attached to AIDS (sometimes by patients themselves, or their families) may be reluctant to report an AIDS diagnosis. In addition, many people who lack access to adequate medical care — poor people, people of color, IV drug users, prisoners, teenagers and women — will not come in contact with the people who do the reporting and will be misrepresented in the statistics. Prisons, for example, are notorious for their failure to recognize and report cases of AIDS.

It is also important to examine how the presentation of the CDC numbers is distorted. The categories listed in the CDC table inaccurately represent data about transmission. By presenting risk groups (primarily gay/bisexual men and IV drug users) under "transmission categories," the data tells us little about which high-risk activities are associated with the spread of AIDS and perpetuates the myth that certain kinds of people are inherently carriers of the disease.

For a more detailed analysis of the CDC's statistics, see the centerspread in **GCN**, Vol. 15, No. 40. We welcome your input about the CDC numbers we print and suggestions about statistical information you would like to see. □

## Mother, Mother

Continued from page 6,

is the "bad mother," the bitchy, domineering mother, and she's got the body language to prove it.

After Martha's visit, Barbara writes her son. Jeff refuses to open the letter, however. In fact, he hasn't opened any of her letters in the several years since she refused to allow Jeff and his now-dead lover into her well-appointed, if somewhat antiseptic, suburban house for Thanksgiving.

It seems that Jeff and his mother the dragonlady are destined never to patch up their relationship. Despite this, Jeff's friend Kate (Bess Armstrong, who you may remember as the junior advertising exec Julia Peters in the mid-'70s sitcom *On Our Own*) decides to invite Barbara to a surprise birthday party she and some of Jeff's friends from the hospice are throwing for what they fear may be Jeff's last birthday (unfortunately, neither Jeff's nor Kate's connection to the hospice is clearly defined in the script, and the same can be said of Jeff's teaching job). In the meantime, Kate and Jeff attend a Louise Hay-inspired healing circle which begins with a rousing rendition of Cris Williamson's "Song of the Soul." At the healing circle, Jeff realizes that he can't die without reconnecting to his mother.

The film cuts to Jeff walking in on his surprise party. Everyone, including Jeff, has a great time and there are balloons and streamers everywhere. During the party, in a pensive moment, Jeff looks out the window and sees his mother. Furtively, Barbara approaches the door, but she can't bring herself to ring the bell. She unloads the bag of presents she brought with her onto the doorstep and begins to leave. Jeff rushes out after her, and they embrace.

Well, because of budget limitations, the movie ends there. A little abrupt, I know.

I like a movie that tugs on my heart-strings. But in the case of *Mother, Mother* I felt my tears had been wasted. Sure, the subject matter is moving (how could it not be?), but Dickoff's treatment of the story is basically trite. The principal characters are shallow, and the secondary ones just can't stop smiling. Both mothers are defined by the age-old "good mother, bad mother" dichotomy (not a favorite of mine, in case you hadn't guessed).

And though Jeff is Gay and Proud, he is certainly not part of a gay community confronting AIDS. I think Dickoff took this

tack intentionally. She told me that "if some homophobe watches this movie and forgets that Jeff is gay and just thinks of him as a person with a terminal illness, then I think the movie's accomplished its goal."

I can see that this approach might win some temporary victories with a few "unreachables," and that's not unimportant. All the same, I'm still hoping for films that embrace gay men with AIDS as *gay men with AIDS* — not just ill people. And I'm hoping for gay and lesbian filmmakers who try to get viewers to confront their homophobia and misogyny, instead of encouraging audiences to ignore these issues.

*Mother, Mother will be distributed at no charge to schools, AIDS organizations, theaters and television stations. All profits from the film go to non-profit AIDS organizations. For more information, contact Mother, Mother Productions, 8306 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 29, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211. □*

## Correction

To contact Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, and Laura Whitehorn (featured in last week's centerspread), please write them at: Linda Evans 233-411, D.C. Jail, 1901 D St., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003; Susan Rosenberg 233-412 (same address); Laura Whitehorn 220-858 (same address).

What with their being so busy and all, someone at GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders) goofed up their ad about the Immigration Forum. The real date and time of the forum are Tuesday, January 17, 7:30pm. For more information, call GLAD at 617/426-1350.

## Troubled People

Loneliness, depression. Gays  
& Lesbians are not immune.

I encourage an initial  
interview at no charge.

Ruth Chessman,  
M.A.

964-2510

(please note corrected phone  
number)



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Events phone: (617) 782-8894

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Multi-service agency seeks organized, meticulous, 25 hrs./week individual. Skilled in administration, typing and word processing (IBM-PC); Multimate and/or 1-2-3 preferred. Will assist Exec. Director in proposal and report preparation. \$13,500-15,800 plus benefits.

Resume to: Cambridgeport Problem Center, 1 West St., Cambridge, MA 02139. AA/EOE.

Attendant for disabled lesbian art therapist. Monday 8:30 a.m. through Friday 8:30 a.m. (48 hrs.) \$200 clear. Lifting, driving, personal care. Light sleeper, non-smoker preferred. Call 524-0921. (28)

## ROOMMATE WANTED

2LF seek 3rd for large Brighton apartment in house. No smoking, vegetarian, must love pets, no more please. \$300 plus. Call (617) 254-0407. (26)

Somerville: 2F seek 3rd (25 plus) to share large 3 bedroom duplex near T. \$300 plus 623-7065. (27)

### SOMERVILLE

Two independent LFs seek LF to share 3BDRM near Davis Square T, porches, hardwood floors, smokefree, petless. \$288 plus util. Available Feb. 1. We're friendly, quiet, responsible. Call us. Sheila 628-1952, Tina 628-0243. (28)

### SOMERVILLE

LF and BiF, 29 and 28 seek F 25 plus for 3 bedroom apartment in Somerville. Independent and quiet home, near T and Harvard/Inman Squares. No pets or smoking please. We have a cat. \$255 plus utilities. Available Feb. 1. Call 492-7653. (26)

### DOR/ASHMONT LUX SING FAM "SAFE"

Luxurious single family 4 bedrm home. Liv rm. Din rm. Kitchen, washer/dryer, dishwasher, porches, deck, yard, offstreet pkg. Two bdms are yours. Fresh paint/paper. \$475 near T. Diane, 734-2189. Lv. mess. (26)

Allston: F wanted for three bedroom in triple decker to share with 1 LF and one straight woman. 330-plus, 24 years old-plus. Active, aware, positive, emotionally stable. For Feb. 1. 254-2025. (26)

## TRY GCN'S GUARANTEED ROOMMATE AD

GCN's "Guaranteed Roommate" offer: ALL ROOMMATE AND HOUSEMATE ADS THAT ARE PREPAID FOR TWO WEEKS WE WILL RUN UNTIL YOU FIND A ROOMMATE

Ads will not be automatically renewed. You must call in every additional week you want the ad to run. Phone calls will be accepted all day Mondays and Tuesdays until noon. 426-4469.

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Professional GM seeks male or female roommate(s) on charming New England house on Mass. Ave. in Lexington, near Arlington line. Wood floors, fireplace, backporch, parking. \$550 per month includes all, less with third roommate. Call 863-2395, leave message. (26)

LF seeks same to share 6 room chem. and smoke-free apartment in Brookline near Pond. Good location, nice apartment. \$425 plus low cost heat and utilities. Call 277-4495. (26)

2LF friends seek roommate 25-plus L/Bi for our happy Somerville house. Large, sunny, homey, 3 BR, drug smoke-free. \$300-plus. Call 623-5535. (26)

2LF seek GM or LF, non-smoker, no drugs, min. alcohol, for spacious 4BR Ashmont Hill apt. \$350 plus. Call 282-9317. (message). (26)

LF seeks roommate to share apt. in Belmont. Fireplace, backyard, near T. Quiet neighborhood, \$380 plus utilities. 484-7305. (26)

2 LFs, 28 and 23, seek non-smoking, vegetarian LF 25-plus, with sense of humor for beautiful Somerville apartment. Have cat who wans feline companion. Available 1/15, \$310 plus. 776-7909. (26)

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## APARTMENTS

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1 bedroom apartment, ultra modern kitchen & bath, elegant lighting fixtures, \$775. Front Page Realty, 268-4700. (27)

### Somerville

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### GREENHOPE FARM

Cozy Farmhouse/Inn nestled in Vermont's mountains. X-country ski from our door, downhill nearby at Stowe. Lesbian owned and operated. Gay men welcome. Veg. meals, smoke-free. Call (802) 533-7772. (27)

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## GCN SPECIALS

Did you get a new HUMIDIFIER for Xmas? Wanna give us your old one? Just call Mike at GCN, (617) 426-4469. Thanks. (26)

### DUTCH-ENGLISH TRANSLATOR NEEDED

A lovely lesbian/gay Dutch magazine called SEK has offered reprint permission to GCN! But none of us can read Dutch. If you can and would be willing to volunteer translation time, we'd be thrilled! Call Stephanie at GCN, (617) 426-4469. (26)

### DICTIONARIES NEEDED!

The average educational level of prisoners is junior high school (meaning that many haven't even finished elementary school). Both because they have "time" now and because they need to understand the pretentious "legalese" and other language of the system, they need dictionaries.

Please consider keeping an eye out for "deals" and picking up a few for us to send out. THANKS!

GCN News and Features writers need cassette recorders. If you have a working one that you're not using, or want to donate one, it would be well used. Thank you.

## PUBLICATIONS

### OFF OUR BACKS

Lively, down-to-earth feminism in the nation's oldest women's newsjournal. Analysis, reviews, conference coverage, and news — on health, feminist theory, reproductive rights, civil rights, and political work among working, disabled, incarcerated, old, and poor women, women of color, lesbians, and women from every continent. \$15/11 issues. Trial sub: \$4/3 issues. oob, Dept. GCN, 2423, 18th St., NW, Washington, DC 20009. (ex)

### WOMEN'S REVIEW OF BOOKS

monthly review of current feminist writing. Since 1983. Our readers span the U.S., Canada, and abroad. Subscriptions: \$15/U.S., \$18/Canada, \$25/institutions. Free sample issue on request. THE WOMEN'S REVIEW, Wellesley Women's Research Center, Wellesley, MA 02181. (ex)

### BLACK/OUT

Special 10th Anniv. edition of Black/Out now available. This bi/annual magazine from the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays contains essays, reviews, poetry, news and announcements concerning the Black Lesbian and Gay community. Sample copy \$6 plus \$1 postage. 1 year subscription (2 issues) \$10 to Black/Out c/o NCBLG, 19641 West Seven Mile, Detroit, MI 48219. (ex)

### LESBIAN CONTRADICTION

A Journal of Irreverent Feminism. Quarterly of commentary, analysis, reviews, cartoons & humor by and for women who agree to disagree—who are still political, but not necessarily correct. Sample \$1.50; sub \$6; more if/less if. LesCon, 584 Castro, #263G, SF, CA 94114. (16--)

GUARDIAN: Independent radical newsweekly. Covers Gay, women and minority struggles and international progressive movements. Special offer—4 issues FREE. Write Guardian, Dept GCN, 33W 17th St. NY, NY, 10011. (ex)

### off our backs

Celebrating 15 years of radical feminist journalism. We bring feminist national/international news analysis and reviews each month. \$11 year, 11 issues. (\$15 for contributing subs) \$20 institutional fee. Sample \$3 for 3 issues! Write 'off our backs' Dept GCN, 1841 Columbia Rd. NW, Room 212 Washington, DC 20009. (ex)

### OUTRAGEOUS WOMEN

A journal of woman-to-woman s/m. Fantasy, analysis, erotic art and much more. Sub: \$13/four issues. Single issues \$4. Must state you are over 18. SAFE for info. PO Box 23, Somerville MA 02143. (ex)

WOMAN OF POWER: "A Magazine of Feminism, Spirituality, and Politics," an inspiring international quarterly publication. Subscriptions \$22 for 4 issues; single issues \$6 plus \$1 postage. P.O. Box 827, Cambridge, MA 02238, telephone (617) 625-7885. (ex)

## PUBLICATIONS

ON OUR BACKS, the sexual entertainment magazine for lesbians, is 48 pages of erotic fiction, features, plus timely sexual advice and news columns. We are quarterly, national, unique and provocative. \$15/yr sub or \$5 current issue to: On Our Backs, PO Box 421916, San Francisco, CA 94142. (ex)

## ORGANIZATIONS

### OLDER LESBIAN ENERGY

Social and support group for women over 40. P.O. Box 1214, East Arlington, MA 02174. (15.48)

### BLACK AND WHITE MEN TOGETHER

Multiracial group for all people. Call (415) 431-1976 or write BWMT, suite 140, 584 Castro St. SF, CA, 94114. (16.1)

### BOSTON ALLIANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

Social support group for youth 22 and under. Wed. night general meeting from 7:30-9pm. New persons meeting at 6:00. Women's meeting at 6:45. Call 523-7363 for info. (15.32)

### MAN/BOY LOVE

Intergenerational Love Support Group. World wide news, art, opinions. Application, informat n free. Bulletin \$1.00 NAMBLA, P.O. Box 1923, S. Louis, Missouri, 63118. (7)

## Prisoners Seeking Friends

TO ALL THOSE, IN & OUT OF PRISON, WHO FIGHT AGAINST THEIR BONDAGE. Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*



ATTENTION PRISONERS! The next issue of *New Studies on the Left* will be all about prisoners and the system. See the News Note on Page 2 of this issue for information on how you can contribute to it!

Prisoners, Will some of you (who have an extra stamp) let me know if your joint allows you to make 1-800 phone calls. (So I can know whether to bother putting in these phone numbers for AIDS info etc. when I hear about them.)

PRISONERS writing PRISONERS — GCN/Mike can NOT be forwarding mail between prisoners (on a regular basis). If the mailrooms catch us, it could endanger the right of prisoners to get GCN there.

NAMBLA told me that your paper runs free ads for prisoners. A letter from anyone would be greatly appreciated and answered. I am incarcerated for being a boylover. Larry DORN-BUSH, D-27488 (22-12), PO Box 8103, San Luis Obispo CA 93409

Bi-male would enjoy writing to some good, openminded person. Enjoy old folk, rock n roll, blues and life in general. Easy going, yet have my pouting moments. Richard LUNSFORD, 884341, PO Box 30 (2-4B), Pendleton IN 46064

GM Scorpio, educated, compassionate, and lonely. (Also: BOB.S. in Calif, moved and misplaced your address. Please write.) Terry HALL, 84950, 3CH-IIR-1, Box 128, Eddyville KY 42038.

Hi everybody! I'm a 'bi-sexual' and I'd like to hear from all you gorgeous 'bis' TSs or TVs out there in the free-world. If your sincere and non-violent I'm very sincere and submissive (dominate at times), not into violence, s&m etc, BUT I'm just wild about sex, and the outdoors and animals. Please send photo if you can. Jeffery GRIFFIN, 390066, J-321, Rt 1 Box 150, Tennessee Colony TX 75861

Loveable, versatile, cuddler, seeks guy to exchange thoughts, dreams via letters. Have only one person on the outside (mother) and there's a lot I can't talk with her about. In Texas they only give out pain, no wages. I'd like to be able to make (collect) calls. Tom BUTLER, 363900, 1301 Franklin St. 9A1, Houston TX 77002.

Please help me to locate some pen pals out there. I'll be out in less than a year and I know from the past that if I am to remain outside, I'll need some friends to help find work and a place to live. James WILKINSON, 064567, 3950 Tiger Bay Rd (A-N-11) Daytona Beach FL 32014

I would like an ad in your penpal column. It's very lonely in here and I'm into people and feelings, not objects and money. David NUETZEL, 077780—1422, Box 1100, Avon Park FL 33825.

### Need friend with a warm heart!

Just need a friend? I welcome all HIV (pos) and AIDS (pos) individuals who need a friend to write and let's kick it. I'm 32, pre-op, and I've seen and heard it all, and I accept a person for just that, 'being themselves'. Drop me a line. Kristy CRUNK, Rt 1 Box 36, Jackson NC 27845.

I am bisexual and would like to correspond with gays, for I'd rather try and become involved with gays. I'd like to be put on your mailing list too. Keep up the good work! Mike BUCHANAN, 932671, Box 900 IMU-A-207, Shelton WA 98584.



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The women of Admin. Custody (AC) status are in dire need of legal advice. We are being refused legal materials and assistance. So far the Ohio and national political officials have been unwilling to help out. Please contact: Cynthia Lorre Williams, 18455, AC status, 1479 Collins Ave, Marysville OH 43040

I am interested in writing to a woman. I'm in prison now for defending myself from a man. I'd like a penpal. I am a lesbian. Thank you very much. Crystal GOLSTEN, Box 9007, Framingham MA 01701.

I respect all you're doing for the gay people, locked up or free. I'm a LF who needs a friend. I'm 28, strawberry blond, and I love dominant women. Any race. Will answer all. Dborah BILLINGS, 140770, MBCC-EHU, Box 11492, Oklahoma City OK 73136.

Gay male, transsexual, 'Dianna Marie', 34 yrs, green eyes, brown hair, would appreciate hearing from any free person out there beyond the fences. Loving, warm, compassionate. John S. BELLONE, D-24668 Rm 7275, PO Box 8101, San Luis Obispo CA 93409.

I would like to hear from a serious gay on the outside. Eugene WORSLEY, 125518, C-1, C-3, State Farm, VA 23160.

### Into Flea Markets

Someone attempted to rape me (unsuccessfully, Thank God) and now I'm in 'protective custody' (isolation) unable to have a job or to collect 'good behavior' time for earlier release. I would like to place a penpal ad. My interests include collecting things (antiques, old bottles, toy trains), going to flea markets, garage sales, auctions. I draw, write poems, do photography. Hope to hear from someone. Denny R. NORMAN, 205454, Box 316, Ft. Madison IA 52627

Please put my name in your paper so that somebody can write to me. I am a very lonely man in here. I'm 37 yrs old Black bisexual male who would like to hear from someone out there who has feeling. Robert Lee ANDERSON, EF-166918, 4600 Fulton Mill Rd, Macon GA 31213.

### Overcoming drinking (with help)

I am serving time for driving while intoxicated and would especially like to hear from those who have overcome drinking problems, although I will be glad to hear from whoever wants to write. I would prefer not to receive 'sex by mail' letters. I need friendship and support, not fantasy. Daniel RODENBERG, 263657, 1301 Franklin—906, Houston TX 77002

I am in lockdown and need some one to correspond with to help pass the time away. I'm 22 and have approximately two years to serve. Anything you can do to help me find a penpal I would appreciate it very much. Johnny ROSS, 103186, Camp J Cuda 3L9, Angola LA 70712.

I'd love to hear from all TVs, Trisexuals, Gays on the outside. I'm 24, Bi, and hope to make some friends before I get out. Larry FERGUSON, 412836 C2-118, Rt 6 Ellis II, Huntsville TX 77340

My close intimate friends call me 'Joann' and I would like some penpals to write me. I have been in about 5 yrs, am financially secure and will not be needing money. My age is 28. Joe LYNN, 150978 — HU-5, 1012 W. Columbia, Farmington MO 63640

### I'd like to leave Indiana

I told my parents that I ws gay and they couldn't handle it and told me to find another place to live when I get out. My hobbies are stamp collecting, cars, and I like to dress up in drag occasionally. I'd like to leave Indiana. Please help. Randall FELIX, 855268—H, 727 Moon Rd, Plainfield IN 46168.

Very built Black male in desperate need of someone to correspond with. I wish to write an open minded male who is not afraid of expressing himself. Christopher MURRAY, M-8994, Drawer R, Huntingdon PA 16652.

Bi-male looking for some faithful correspondence with anyone. I'm Aries, enjoy music, any find form of art and travel. Will write anyone. Race and sex is of no importance. Scott BUCHANAN, 158151 (5A-14), 1012 W. Columbia, Farmington MO 63640

My hobbies include hunting, cooking and traveling. I'm very lonely and would like a friend. I'm not allowed to write other prisoners. Larry SHEELY, 095468 (MB 464), 1150 SW Allapattah Rd., Indiantown FL 34956



# Calendar



Jerry Bauer

24 Tuesday □ Author David Leavitt (**The Lost Language of Cranes**) reads from his new novel **Equal Affections** at the Brattle Theater, 40 Brattle Street, Cambridge. 5:30pm. Free. Info: 617/354-4223.

Please note: Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos with listings are encouraged. Please specify if your event is or is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted.

## 14 Saturday

**Boston** □ Fred Barton in **Miss Gulch Returns**. Club Cabaret, 209 Columbus. 8pm. Also 1/15, 1/18-22. \$10, \$12 (Fri., Sat.).

**Cambridge** □ The Alley Theatre presents **Getting Out**, a drama about an incarcerated self-destructive teen who evolves into a rehabilitated, self-sufficient woman. Runs through 2/25. 1253 Cambridge St. Info: 617/491-8166.

**Somerville** □ **Girth and Mirth** holds a murder mystery. 8pm. \$4, \$5 (non-members). Info: Lenny, 617/825-3032; Joe/Michael 666-4283.

**Cambridge** □ **Coming Out: Open Discussion for Women of All Ages**. May continue to meet if sufficient interest. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 11am-1pm. Info: 617/354-8807.

**Northampton** □ "Vamp," starring Grace Jones will be shown by **Shelix**, a woman-to-woman S/M support group. Chem-free. 8pm. \$2. Info: 413/584-7616.

## 15 Sunday

**Boston** □ Brunch with the **Alliance of Mass Asian Lesbians and Gay Men** for Asians. 1pm. \$2 (food provided) Reservations ASAP. Info: 617/262-6670.

**Lowell** □ Potluck with **Gay in the Merrimack Valley**. First Grace Unitarian Fellowship, 79 Florence Ave. Info: David 508/452-4686, Bob 508/458-0011.

**Boston** □ **Deadline for entries to Women on Women**, an art exhibition on March 8th. Send up to 10 clearly labeled slides to: Boston Women's Caucus for Art, c/o Grazi Marzot, 178 W. Brookline St., Boston 02118.

**Cambridge** □ **Martin Luther King Tribute** at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St. Music & dance party. 7pm.

**Cambridge** □ **Journey Into a Dream**, a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Fitzgerald Theatre, Cambridge Rindge and Latin High, 459 Broadway. 7pm. \$8, \$4 students and senior citizens. Info: 617/876-6868.

## 16 Monday

**Boston** □ **Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Brunch** with Men of All Colors Together. All welcome. 195 West Newton St. (South End). Info: George, 617/266-4378.

**Cambridge** □ Stone Soup presents **Riq Hospodar and Macha Womongold**. 280 Green St. 8-10pm. Donation. Info: 617/227-0845.

## 17 Tuesday

**Boston** □ **Forum on Immigration Law Reform** sponsored by GLAD and Alliance of Mass Asian Lesbians and Gay Men. Barney Frank et al. 250 Stuart St. Rm. 222. (UMass). 7:30pm. All welcome. Info: 617/426-1350.

**Boston** □ General meeting for **New England Gay and Lesbian Veterans**. Piemonte Room, Boston City Hall. 7-10pm. Info: Cliff, 617/723-8127.

**Boston** □ **Healing Service** for all affected by AIDS. Old South Church, Dartmouth and Boylston Sts. 7:30pm. Info: 617/536-1970.

**Brookline** □ **Discussion for people affected by AIDS**. Jewish Family and Children's Service, 636 Brookline St. 7:30pm. Info: Nancy 617/566-5716.

**Cambridge** □ **Training for Countering Harassment** at the Metropolitan Community Church office, 720 Mass. Ave. 7pm. Info: 617/523-7664.

## 18 Wednesday

**Boston** □ **Living Well Workshop** for anyone concerned about how stress effects health and especially immunity. Fenway Community Health Center, 93 Mass. Ave, 4th floor. Free but pre-register. Info: Paul, 617/267-0900.

**Boston** □ **Boston NOW's Lesbian Rights Task Force** meets at 971 Comm. Ave. 7pm. Info: 617/782-1056.

## 19 Thursday

**Boston** □ **GCN Production Night**. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St. near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

**Boston** □ **Black Feminist Theory and Practice**, part of the Northeastern University Women Studies Boston Area Colloquium on Feminist Theory. The Frost Lounge, the Ell building. 8pm. Info: 617/437-4984.

## 20 Friday

**Boston** □ **GCN Mailing** Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St. near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

**Cambridge** □ Group forming for **Lesbian Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse/Incest**. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7-8:30pm. Info: Cathy, 617/623-7258.

**Brookline** □ **Am Tikva** Martin Luther King commemorative program. Please bring something sweet. Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon St. All welcome. 8pm. Info: 617/782-8894.

**Waltham** □ **Las Vegas Night Benefit for The Support Committee for Battered Women**. The Quality Inn, 455 Totten Pond Rd. 7:30-midnight. \$2. Info: Jane, 617/891-0724.

**Providence, RI** □ **South East Gay and Lesbian Country Dance Series**. Body Lab, 566 S. Main St. 8-11pm. \$5. Info: Chris, 401/431-0822.

**Boston** □ **A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China or Surface is Illusion but so is Depth**, a film by Philip Haas featuring gay artist David Hockney. At the Museum of Fine Arts, 465 Huntington Ave. 7:30pm. \$4. Info: 267-9300.

## 21 Saturday

**Cambridge** □ **For Love and For Life: The 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights**, a multi-image slide-show by Joan E. Biren (JEB). To benefit GCN. Paine Hall, Harvard U., 8pm. \$6-10, sliding scale. No advance ticket sales. Wheelchair accessible, sign language interpreted. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

**Boston** □ Dim sum brunch in Chinatown with the **Boston Bisexual Men's/Women's Networks**. Meet in park next to Chinatown arch. 10:45am. About \$6. Info: 617/BIS-MOVE.

## 22 Sunday

**Boston** □ **Women in the Arts Showcase** presents **Cheryl Wheeler** at Somewhere Else, 295 Franklin St. 7:30pm. \$5. Info: 617/423-7730.

**Boston** □ **Lesbians in Nursing**, a new group. Potluck dinner at 6pm. Info: Janice, 617/254-4443.

**Boston** □ **Prime Timers**, an organization for older gay men. "Alcoholism and the Older Gay Male." Lindemann Health Center, 25 Staniford St. 2-4pm. \$1. Info: Box 352, Reading, MA 01867.

## 24 Tuesday

**Cambridge** □ **Training in self-defense** at the Metropolitan Community Church office on 720 Mass. Ave. Info: 617/523-7664.

**Boston** □ **Living Well Workshop** on massage, polarity therapy and acupuncture. Fenway Community Health Center, 93 Mass Ave. 4th floor. 6pm. Free. Info: Paul, 617/267-0900.

**Cambridge** □ **David Leavitt** reads from his new novel, **Equal Affections**, at the Brattle Theater, 40 Brattle St. Sponsored by Wordsworth Readings, a new series. 5:30pm. Autographing party at 6:30pm. Free. Info: 617/354-4223.

## 25 Wednesday

**Cambridge** □ **Lesbian Couples: Relationships with their Parents**, sponsored by Focus Counseling and Consultation. Gutman Library, Appian Way & Brattle Sts. 8-9:30pm. \$10/15. Info: 617/876-4488.

**Cambridge** □ **Lesbian Partners of Incest Survivors**. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-9:30pm. Info: 617/354-8807. (TTY/voice).

## Weekly Events

### Saturday

**Cambridge** □ **SANCHIN Women's School of Karate and Self Defense** conducts ongoing beginning classes, and open workouts. YWCA, 7 Temple St. 3-5pm. Tue. and Thur. 6-8pm. Info: 617/924-3799.

**Boston** □ **Living With AIDS Theatre Project** workshop. No performance experience necessary. Club Cabaret, 209 Columbus Ave. 10:30am.

**Boston** □ **Women's Self-Defense Collective Women's Self-Defense Classes** All ages and abilities. Meets Wed. eves., Sat. afternoons in South End. Info: 617/574-9433.

**Boston** □ **Gay Boston**, with Candace Van Auken. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

### Sunday

**Brookline** □ **Swing and Ballroom Dance Classes** for Lesbians and Gay men. 1/8-3/5. 1636A Beacon St. Beginners. 7:30-8:30; Advanced. 8:30-9:30. \$55-60. Info: 617/522-1444.

**Boston** □ **Metro Healing healing group** for everyone. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: 617/426-9205.

**Boston** □ **"Boston's Other Voice,"** radio for gay/lesbian community, with Peter Stickel. 1/15 Betty Berzon, author of **Permanent Partners, Building Gay and Lesbian Relationships that Last.** 1/22 Gary Dotterman on civil disobedience. WROR 98.5 FM. 11:30pm.

### Monday

**Boston** □ **Straight Talk About Disabilities**, February program on the Deaf Community. M/W nights at 7:30pm, Channel A-22.

**Cambridge** □ **Healing Circle** group healing. 5 Upland Rd., Porter Square. 7:30-9:30pm. \$5 suggested. Info: 617/864-1989.

**Boston** □ **Alcoholics Together** Les/Gay group holds a free discussion meeting Mon.-Fri. at Gay & Lesbian Health, 180 Cambridge St. 12-1:30pm. Info: 617/227-8353.

**Cambridge** □ **Lesbian Rap**. Topics: 1/16 Holiday — no rap. 1/23 Being Out/Lesbian Visibility. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Cambridge** □ **Wise Woman Traditional Herbal Medicine and Women's Wisdom Classes**. From 1/16. Mon, Porter Sq.; Tue, Arlington; Wed, Porter Sq.; Thu, JP. Sliding scale. Info: Whitewolf 617/277-8232.

### Tuesday

**Boston** □ **Support Group for Battered Women** meets at 7pm. Info: 617/899-8676.

**Boston** □ **Lesbian and Gay Concert and Marching Band**. No auditions. YWCA, 120 Clarendon St. 7:15 p.m. Info: Joe 617/625-3304, Zoe 617/396-2989.

**Providence, RI** □ **ACT UP/Rhode Island** open meetings. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. Info: Bill 617/782-9063.

**Roxbury** □ **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. Room 345, Bldg. 3, Roxbury Community College. 7:00pm. Info: 617/49-ACT UP.

**Cambridge** □ **Bisexual Women's Rap**. 1/17 Children/Choices. 1/24 Out or Incognito. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Cambridge** □ **30-plus Lesbian Rap** 1/17 Doing What You Want to Do. 1/24 Lesbians and Children. 7-8:30pm. The Women's Center (see above).

### Wednesday

**Cambridge** □ **"Say It Sister!"** WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

**Boston** □ **Women's Self-Defense Classes** for women of all ages and abilities. See Sat. listing.

**Cambridge** □ **Lesbian AI-Anon** with childcare. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 6:30-8pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Brookline** □ Boston Committee **Determined to Free Sharon Kowalski** meets. Boston Self-Help Center, 18 Williston Rd. 7pm. Info: 617/661-0533.

**Cambridge** □ **MASS ACT OUT** meeting. M.I.T., Building 66, Rm. 126. 7:30pm. Info: 617/661-7737.

### Thursday

**Stoneham** □ **Incest Survivor's Group** for women. New England Memorial Hospital, 5 Woodland Rd. 5-6:30pm. Info: Sara Epstein, Human Services, 617/979-7025.

**Cambridge** □ **The Group** Walker Memorial, MIT on Memorial Drive. Info: 617/266-1129.

**Boston** □ **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** drop-in group for women who have been raped. Info: 617/492-RAPE.

### Friday

**Worcester** □ **AIDS Project** — Worcester support group for HIV positive, PWAs, PWARCs and supporters. Open to all lesbians and gay men. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Info: Dana 508/755-3773.

**Boston** □ **Healing group** for everyone. Santa Fe Hair Salon, 528 Tremont St. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: 617/426-9205.

## National Calendar

**New York** □ **January 19** □ Opening of **For Love and For Life**, an exhibit of Marilyn Humphries' black and white documentary photographs from the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian/Gay Rights and from the 1988 display of the NAMES Project Quilt. At the Lesbian/Gay Community Services Center, 208 W. 13th St. 5:30-7:30pm. Exhibit continues at least through Feb. Info: 212/620-7310.

Calendar compiled by  
Erik Moore



**Broken Noses.** Directed by Bruce Weber. At the Brattle Theater, Camb. Mass. January 17.

By Michael Bronski

In 1983 Bruce Weber and his crew were filming the Colorado Sports Festival for *Interview* magazine. After photographing a young boxer in an old-fashioned bathing suit — tight and revealing — they were forbidden by the boxing federation to photograph the rest of the event. Clearly Weber's homoerotic style and reputation as a gay photographer freaked out those who were determined to keep unblemished such a masculine sport. Sometime later, a young lightweight boxer named Andy Minsker showed up at the studio and announced, "They told me that I was forbidden to come meet you. They said you would give me a weird haircut and make me wear skimpy see-through clothes, and who knows what else you would do to me, and I thought, that's all I need to hear. I'm on my way."

**film** *Broken Noses*, Weber's first film, is about the time he and his crew spend with Andy Minsker and the young — pre-to-early teen — boys in the Mt. Scott Boxing Club that Minsker coaches. Minsker is a natural for the camera. He is not afraid to show off his body or talk about his personal life. There is a willingness to be appreciated — loved — and an ability to meet the camera more than halfway in displaying that need. As the film unfolds we learn more about Andy — the breakup of his parents' marriage, the abuse suffered at the hands of his mother and step-father, his decision to go live with his father (also an ex-boxer) and his new wife, his relationship with his girlfriend (she has given him a pair of white jockey shorts with her picture on the pouch; he shows them to the camera and his students in return for \$100) and his desire to use boxing to get ahead in the world.

Although Minsker has had a tough life and doesn't have really much prospect of escape from the constraints of class (at least not through boxing; fame comes to one in thousands and then it is usually fleeting) Weber does not make the mistake of presenting him as a loser or as a metaphor for anything. Minsker is always treated with respect — as are all of the eager, likable kids



A scene from *Broken Noses*

## A seductive celebration of Aryan manhood

*Weber's Broken Noses tells the story of a working-class boxer's life*

he coaches — and even a little awe. It is as though both Minsker and Weber know that

*Broken Noses* may be the only chance Minsker will ever have of becoming famous.

More than any other movie in recent years, *Broken Noses* painfully exhibits the hidden injuries of class. Like Visconti's 1960 *Rocco and His Brothers* (another great gay boxing film that played at the Brattle last week), *Broken Noses* has an intense underlying sympathy for the young working class male who dreams of a better life.

But along with this sympathy there is something else going on. It is no accident that both Weber and Visconti — gay male artists — have chosen to portray working class men in these films. For Visconti it was clearly his Marxist politics (along with eros) which brought him to this subject matter, and for Weber it was his sense of style (certainly a politic, though perhaps a good deal less admirable than Visconti's) which drew him to Andy Minsker. But more significantly it is the idealization of young working class men which forms the basis for these films. Andy Minsker fits the prototype of the ideal Weber model: good looking, short, almost but not quite marine butch haircut, an all-American '50s look that has little trace of non-Anglo ethnicity and exudes a slightly repressed eroticism hovering too near the surface for the subject and viewer not to be aware of it.

Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography* argues that all photographs are a celebration of their subject matter. And Weber's photos are certainly a celebration of Aryan notions of masculinity. Indeed, Weber has been criticized for playing into what has become known as a fascist aesthetic. *Broken Noses* continues that pattern; many of the individual frames are perfectly "Weberesque" in their lighting and in their attitude towards their subject. On one level — because we get to know Andy and his family and friends — *Broken Noses* becomes less iconography and more an exploration of a personality. These striking images have an individual behind them and we are won over by his charm and need to be loved. However, it is impossible to miss the fact that Andy is being lionized to some degree by Weber as a symbol of perfect American manhood. In the end, as much as we may be seduced by Minsker, we remain mistrustful of Weber's artistic vision. □

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